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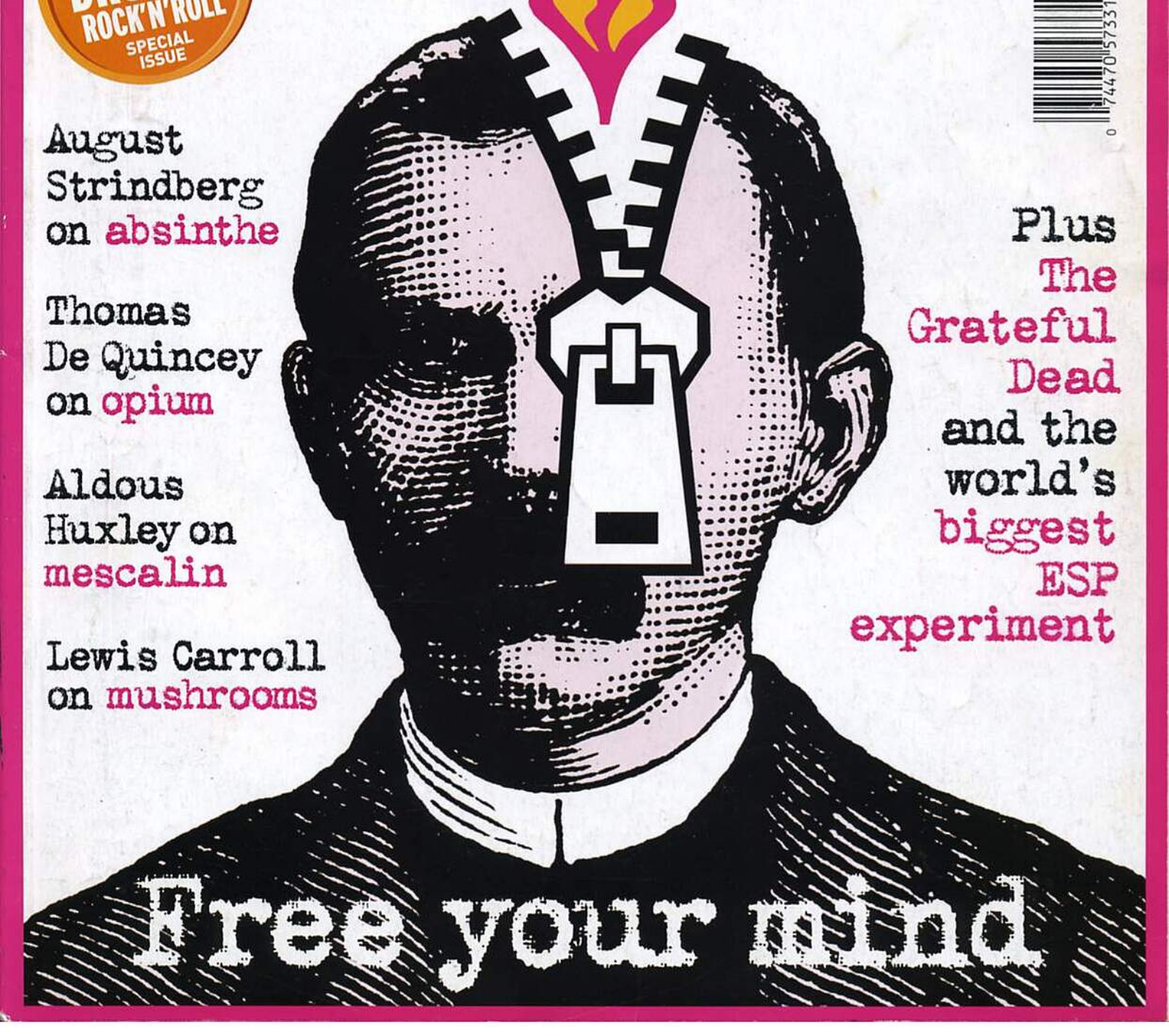

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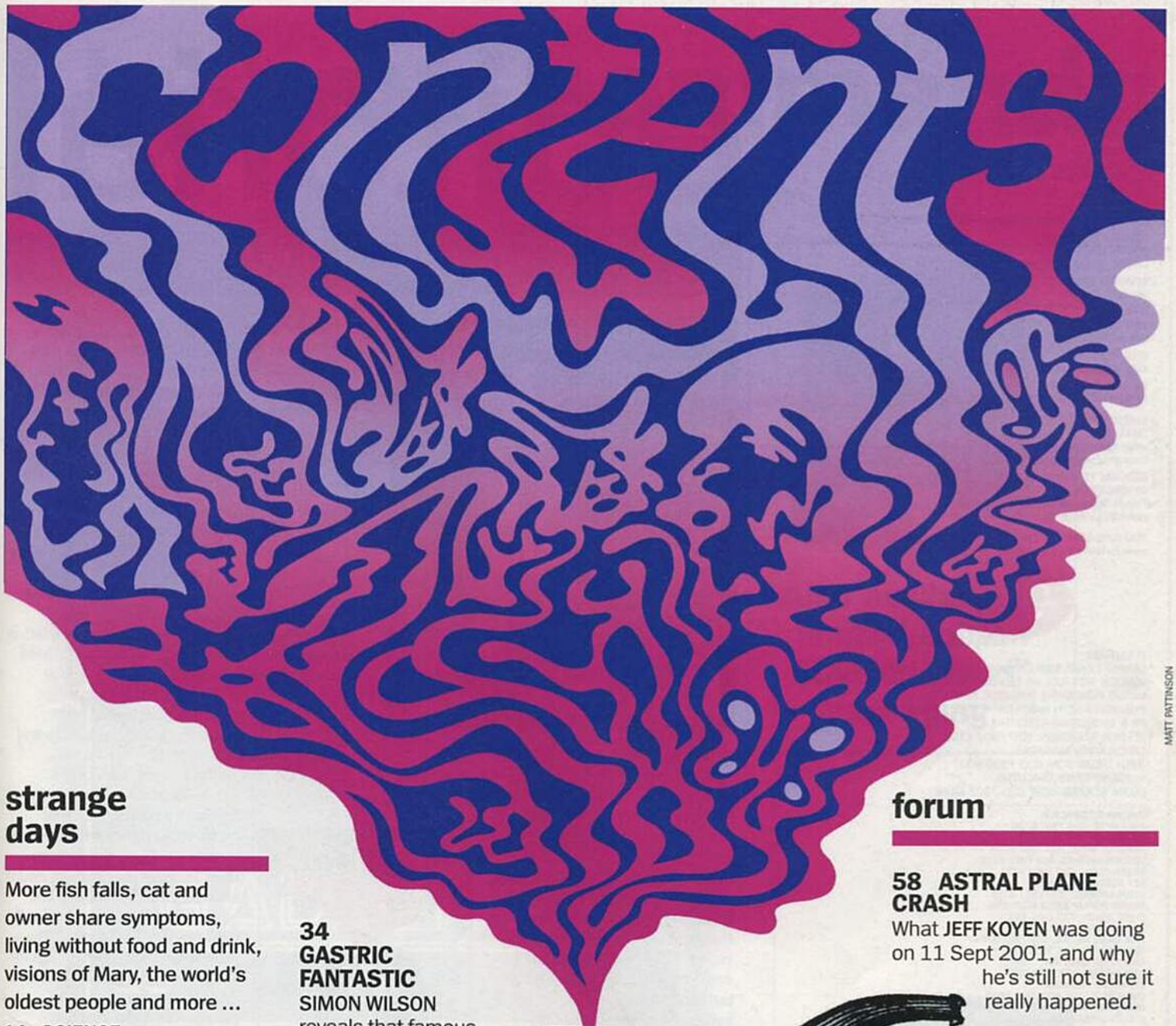

MATT PATINSON

strange days

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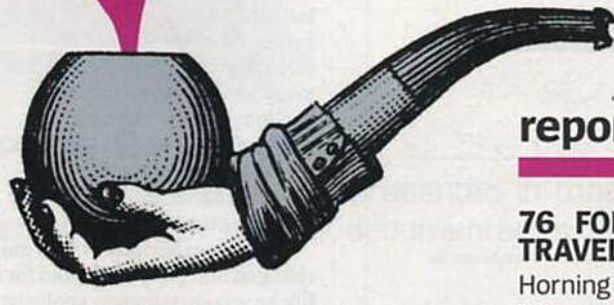

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strangedays

Bonfire inflames passions

Accusations of racism take local townspeople by surprise after mock gypsies are burnt in traditional festival

CONNORS

BLAZE OF GLORY : The 'Gypsy caravan' model in Firle explodes with fireworks on 25 October.

The Firle Bonfire Society in East Sussex provoked a storm of protest on 25 October this year when it paraded a cardboard caravan adorned with paintings of a traveller family, children at the window and a dishevelled woman in the doorway. A number plate – P1KEY – and the words "Strawberry fields for ever" and "Do As You Likey Driveways Ltd – guaranteed to rip you off" were painted on the side. (Pikey is a pejorative term for Gypsies, deriving from the turnpike roads they once travelled.) The caravan was packed full of fireworks and dragged through the village as locals carried flaming torches and crosses. With the main fire roaring in the background, up went the cries when any effigy is burnt: "Burn them! Burn them!" The fuses were lit and up it went.

Bonfire night is one of the most important events of the year in this part of East Sussex. Just up the road is the county town of Lewes, where Queen Mary burnt several Protestants at the stake in 1557. As a result, townsfolk burn effigies of the Pope, alongside other public figures, on their 5 November bonfires to this day. [see **FT77:31; FT79:56; FT102:** 39]. After the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, the most popular figure to burn in effigy around the country was the would-be regicide Guy (Guido) Fawkes. Bonfire night derives from the old Celtic fire festival of Samhain/Saoun at the beginning of November. Samhain day itself was the fourth or middle day of a week's celebrations to mark the end of harvest when effigies representing the ills and sadnesses of the past year were incinerated.

Cries of "Burn them! Burn them!" went up

Every year, Firle Bonfire Society burns an effigy of someone – either local or international – who has particularly annoyed the villagers during the past 12 months. Last summer, a group of Gypsies made a mess in a strawberry field outside the village, provoking a two-month eviction battle; for the Society they seemed an obvious candidate for this year's bonfire.

The organisers expected it to be taken in the "fair game" spirit of Firle bonfire night, but they badly miscalculated. Three weeks later, the village was still suffering the consequences. Police regularly drove through to check there had been no "incidents"; the place swarmed with journalists and cameramen and suspicion was written on every face. Members of the Bonfire Society received death threats and six of them were arrested for questioning on suspicion of inciting racial hatred, which under the 1986 Public Order Act carries a maximum prison sentence of seven years. The police expected to make more arrests.

The writer George Monbiot set the caravan incident in a wider context: "The conflict between settled and travelling peoples goes back at least to the time of Cain and Abel. Cain was a farmer, a settled person; Abel was a herder: a nomad. Cain killed Abel because Abel was the beloved of God. The people who wrote the Old Testament were nomads who had recently settled, and who looked back with longing to the lives of their ancestors. The prophets' constant theme was the corruption of the cities and the purity of life in the wilderness, to which they kept returning. All the great monotheisms were founded by nomads: unlike settled peoples they had no fixed places in which to invest parochial spirits." *D.Telegraph, 30 Oct, 15 Nov; Guardian, 4+12 Nov 2003.*

ALL WHITE NOW
A look at albinism in the animal kingdom
PAGE 6

FAST SHOW
Sadhu's claims of living without food and drink are tested by doctors
PAGE 10

UFOLOGY
Hoaxes and deceptions have a long history in the flying saucer community
PAGE 22

Foreign Accent Syndrome

Tiffany (or Judi) Roberts, 57 (below), a Florida woman who suffered a stroke while doing a crossword puzzle, is the latest victim of "foreign accent syndrome". She now has an English accent – a cross between Eliza Doolittle and Sybil Fawlty. Friends and neighbours ostracised her, accusing her of affecting her new way of talking. Normally, anyone with an English accent is given an effusive welcome in the US, but love of the British is matched by contempt for those who ape a British accent to sound superior. Mrs Roberts had the extra problem of being seen as a freak. She even adopted anglicisms such as "bloody" and "loo".

Her new speech patterns, mixing elements of estuary English, cockney, West Country burr and a hint of Aussie but nothing American, came to light only after months of therapy to help her talk again after the stroke. At first she tried to regain her old pronunciation, listening to a tape of herself recorded from a radio interview before she was paralysed and temporarily lost her powers of speech in 1999. Her old voice was several octaves lower and with a broad north-east US accent from her Philadelphia upbringing – tinged with Indiana, where she was born.

SPLASH NEWS

The accent is all the more strange because she has never been to Britain, has never had a British boyfriend and was not a fan of British television shows. Stung by her neighbours' disapproval, she became a recluse and even contemplated moving from Sarasota to England; but now she is determined to make the best of her new accent. She is writing a book about her ordeal.

There are about 50 cases of Foreign Accent Syndrome described in the medical literature since 1919. "It has to do with vocal tract posture," said Prof Jack Ryalls of the University of Central Florida, who diagnosed Mrs Roberts's condition in September. "British English has tenser vowels." However, other reported cases of the syndrome in Americans have involved what seemed to be German, French, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, Irish, Scottish and Welsh accents.

One case seems to contradict Prof Ryalls's explanation directly. In September 1996, Stewart Rayner, a policeman from Chingford in east London, fractured his skull in a car smash. When he awoke in hospital, his cockney accent had been replaced by a deep Southern US drawl. That same year, senior BBC producer Anne Bristow-Kitney suffered a cerebral hæmorrhage and woke up speaking French with such a good accent that the hospital staff thought she was French. "I knew the language before, but suddenly I was speaking it like a native," she said. "I was not aware of speaking French, just of communicating."

Describing Mrs Bristow-Kitney's case, consultant neurosurgeon Ian Pople gave an explanation at odds with Prof Ryalls. "The speech control centre is left intact," he said, "but the part which links up to it is damaged, so you get a re-emergence of a first language or maybe simply a memory... It's organic brain damage, as opposed to psychiatric, and is usually due to a loss of blood supply... It generally gets better in time."

One of the oddest cases concerned a Norwegian woman hit on the head with shrapnel during a German air raid on her village in 1941. She fell into a coma and when she woke up with a thick German accent she was ostracised by her neighbours. [For more examples, see FT58:26, 76:14, 102:15]. *Ananova, 20 Nov; Sun, 22 Nov; D.Telegraph, 25 Nov; D.Express, 26 Nov 2003.*

EXTRA EXTRA

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM NEWSPAPERS AROUND THE WORLD

'STREETWISE' FISH ELUDING THEIR PURSUERS
Queensland Times, 4 Feb 2003.

TSAR TO FIGHT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
Scotsman, 5 Feb 2003.

BISHOP PROBES CHEATING CLERGYMAN
Leigh Reporter, 6 Feb 2003.

LOVE SAYS SORRY TO VIRGIN
Brisbane Courier Mail, 8 Feb 2003.

HEAD VANISHES ON WAY TO SCHOOL
D.Telegraph, 12 Feb 2003.

SEAGULLS TEAR WOLVES APART
Brighton Sports Argus, 13 Feb 2003.

CHEF IS BATTERED IN ROW OVER YORKSHIRE PUDDING
Metro, 14 Feb 2003.

UMPIRE WILLEY TAKES FIRM STAND
Johannesburg Citizen, 18 Feb 2003.

CANADIAN RABBITS REWRITE RECORDS
Guardian, 20 Feb 2003.

TAX BREAKS FOR NATIVE PLANTS
Brisbane Courier Mail, 21 Feb 2003.

GIANT FROG PROTEST AT FRENCH EMBASSY
Irish Times, 21 Feb 2003.

NIGHTMARE OF MOTHER PURSUED BY HEAD
D.Telegraph, 22 Feb 2003.

BAKEWELL TART PROBE FINDS NO NEW SUSPECTS
D.Mail, 24 Feb 2003.

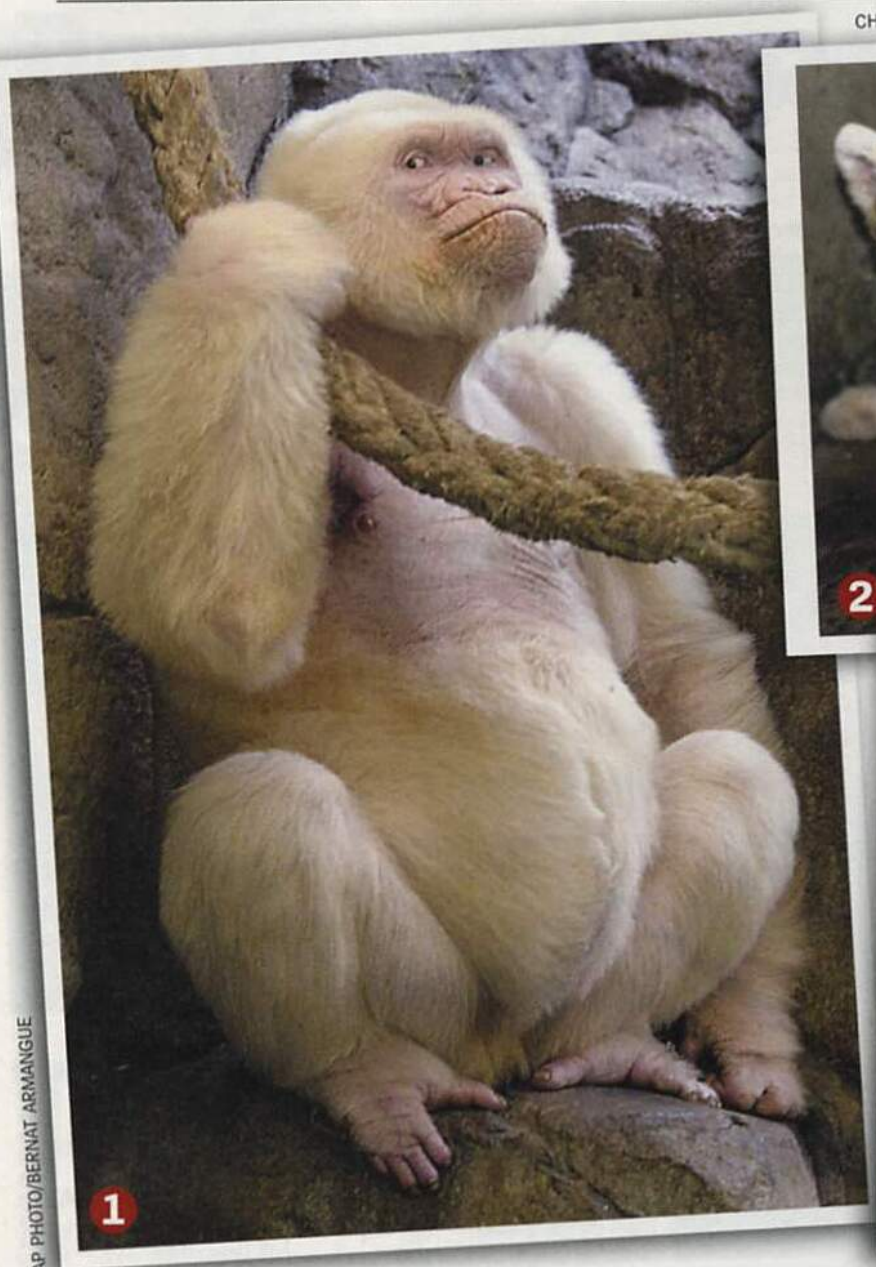
LIFE FOR ROBBERS WHO SHOT DEAD OFFICERS
Gold Coast Bulletin (Queensland), 25 Feb 2003.

POLICE ASSAULT MUM IN COURT
Hereford Journal, 26 Feb 2003.

Behold a pale gorilla

Plus a picture gallery of recent examples of albinism found in the animal kingdom

CHINATOPIX/AP PHOTO



AP PHOTO/BERNAT ARMANGUE

AL GRILLO/AP PHOTO

1 The world's only known albino gorilla (seen above), Copito de Nieve (Snowflake), died in Barcelona zoo on 24 November. Zoo staff euthanised the primate, aged about 40, who had been dying from skin cancer. Since he was found in Guinea in 1966, he had fathered 22 offspring with three mates. None is albino. **[AFP, AP] 25 Nov 2003.**

2 Baby albino tigers crouch in a corner of a cell at Hangzhou Safari Park, Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China. Born 8 June, they have been sold to other zoos for one million yuan (£70,000) each. Only 200 albino tigers are known. *[AP] 24 July 2003.*

3 Baby hedgehog curls up in its owner's hands at a hedgehog club exhibit in Anchorage, Alaska. 24 November. The Romans had a similar event to the North American Groundhog Day, involving a hedgehog looking for its shadow under a clear moon. **[AP] 3 Feb 2001.**

4 Albino blue peafowl seen in Parc Paradisio, Cambron-Casteau, southern Belgium *[R] 12 June 2003.*

5 The only known albino black vulture, seen at World Bird Sanctuary, St Louis, Missouri. **[AP] 25 April 2002.**

6 Albino groundhog Wiarton Willy lying in state after his death on 31 January 1999. Looking on are his handler Sam Brouwer (left) and well wisher Doug Kennedy. **FT121: 11**; *[R] 2 February 1999.*

7 Albino short-tailed monkey being fed, Cinangka, Jakarta, Indonesia. **[R] 23 July 2003.**

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editorial

Art and vision

C'EST LA GUERRE by Martin Ross

"Hell, I don't want you to cure them... I just want to know if they're edible."

WRITERS ON DRUGS

This month we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Aldous Huxley's seminal book *The Doors of Perception* (pp28-32). In 1954, Huxley's reputation as novelist and essayist, the epitome of the English intellectual abroad, was firmly established, but the brilliant satire of *Point Counter Point* or the prescient dystopian vision of *Brave New World* had done little to prepare readers for the bizarre personal experiences and spiritual questions that filled his latest book. Huxley, like many writers before and since, had found a new source of inspiration in the world of drugs, specifically in mescalin, the powerful hallucinogen derived from the peyote cactus.

COVER IMAGE MATT PATTINSON

Huxley's experiments with mescalin changed him profoundly, and for the rest of his life he was a passionate apologist for the psychedelic experience as a potentially life-enhancing, spiritually transformative one that should be available to all.

Unlike the recurring visions that tormented the English Romantic Thomas De Quincey, and which he recorded in his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (pp34-38), or the absinthe-fuelled delusions that took hold of August Strindberg in Paris (pp46-50), Huxley's visionary experience was a profound yet essentially benign one, in which the wonder of things – or the ungraspable *thingness* of things – was revealed in the folds of his trousers.

The idea of drugs, particularly hallucinogens, providing a transcendent and transformative spiritual experience – a sort of "royal road to the unconscious", or a shortcut to God (instead of all that tiresome fasting, meditation or therapy) – was one that was beginning to gain a wider currency in certain parts of American society by the mid-1960s, and nowhere more so than in the countercultural scene of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, where Jerry Garcia and the other members of the Grateful Dead had been conducting their own experiments with the powerful tools of psychedelics and music. The Dead provided a crucial link between the literary tradition of the Beats (who, like Huxley, had tapped into a similar nexus of drugs and spirituality – though with the added magic ingredient of jazz) and the emergent 'hippie' movement through their association with Beat legend Neal Cassady and Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters. It was an association that came to an early fruition in Kesey's 'Acid Tests' – at which the Dead were the 'house band'. These LSD-fuelled 'happenings' dissolved the boundaries between performance and consumption, spectacle and spectator into a swirling *gestalt* in which anything could happen. It was hardly the genteel tripping recorded by Huxley, but this model of a pulsing, organic group mind was one that would inspire the Dead throughout their long, strange career; and it also led directly to one of the oddest footnotes to rock 'n' roll history – the 'ESP shows'. These were a week-long run of gigs in 1971, in which the Dead teamed up with respected parapsychologist Stanley Krippner (see **FT178:32**) to conduct what is still the world's largest telepathy experiment. Read the full story of this collision between music, drugs and dreams on pp52-56. The results may have been inconclusive, but the Grateful Dead's ESP shows remain a brave attempt to get parapsychology out of the lab and onto the dance floor.

DAVID SUTTON

BOB RICKARD PAUL SIEVEKING

Why fortean?

Everything you always wanted to know about Fortean Times but were too paranoid to ask!

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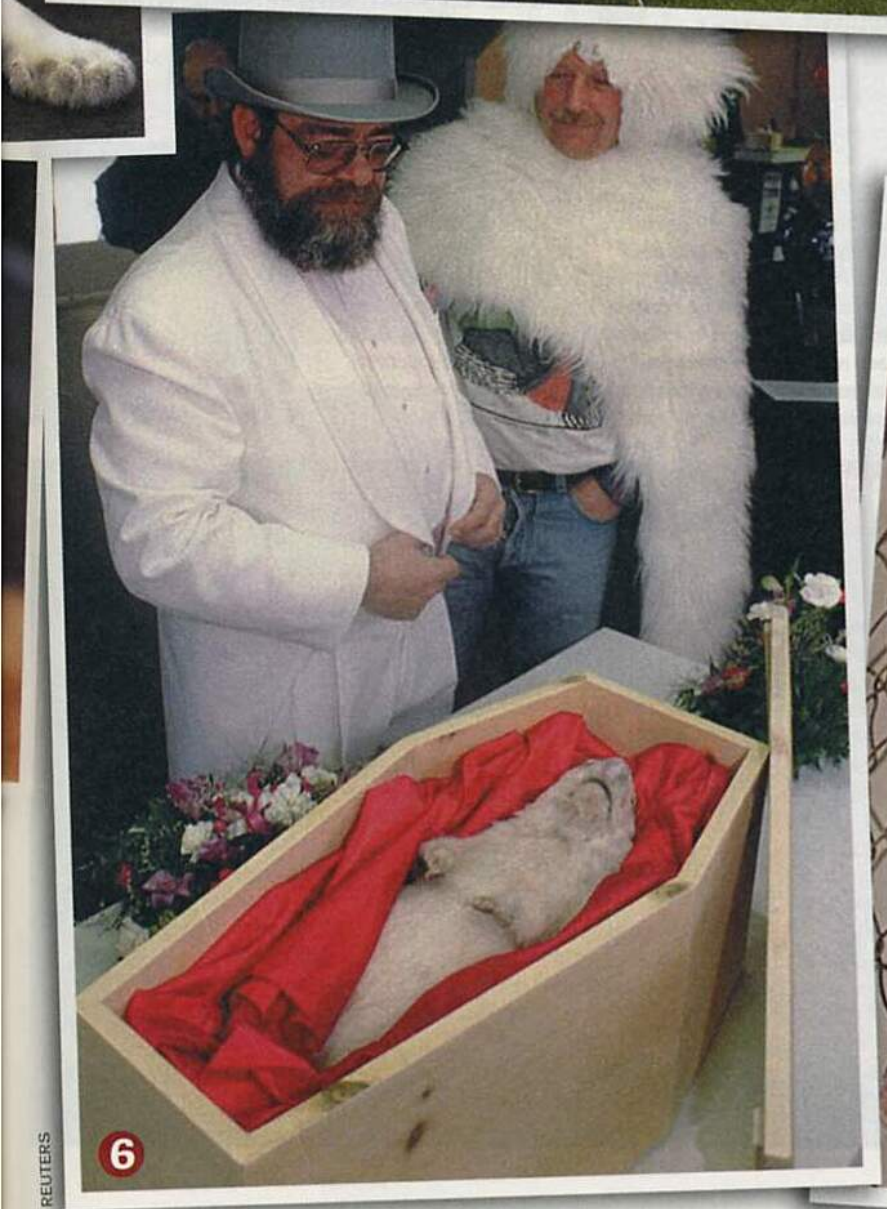

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REUTERS

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ENNY NURAHENI/REUTERS

SIDELINES...

ALIENS A GAS

A man, his wife and daughter in Yukhnov, Russia, were amazed when a flying saucer appeared outside their window. The man called his teenage son to warn him not to come home as there were aliens outside. Sceptical, the young man came home anyway, to find gas pouring from the kitchen stove. A forgotten kettle had boiled over, putting out the flame. Doctors said the family had experienced a mass hallucination brought on by the gas. *Ananova, 23 Oct 2003.*

DEAD UNLUCKY

Misty Quackenbush of Cortez, Colorado, faced jail for drug dealing, so she tried to fake her own death. She put her ID in a truck, added some blood, then set fire to it and fled 600 miles (966km) to Shamrock, Texas, where she was immediately spotted by an old classmate – now a police officer – who had read about her supposed death. *Dayton (OH) News, 24 Aug; Sunday Mail, 12 Oct 2003.*

SAUDI SAND SHORTAGE

Saudi Arabia has banned exports of sand and tightened border controls to stop smugglers, the *Arab News* reported. A growth in construction activity, particularly in Bahrain, is threatening a shortage – apparently. *Guardian, 6 Nov 2003.*

MERKIN MANIA

Pubic hair transplants are all the rage in South Korea, where bushiness is considered a sign of fertility. Women pay as much as US$2,500 (£1,470) to have hair transplanted from their heads. The bandages can be removed after 24 hours. *NY Post, 3 Sept 2003.*

Falling out of the blue

DAVE CHARNLEY / MIDDLESBROUGH EVENING GAZETTE

PISCENE PRECIPITATION SEEN ALL OVER THE PLAICE

Dozens of small sea fish fell on a road and across three back gardens in Woollahra, near Sydney, Australia, on 19 September. Natalie Gouverneur, 33, collected some on a plate. "They looked plump and fresh and full," said Dr Matthew Smith, another local resident. The local Bureau of Meteorology provided the usual waterspout explanation, although none had been observed. *Sydney Sunday Telegraph, 21 Sept 2003.*

On 23 October, Lyn Harper of Brass Castle Lane, Middlesbrough, Cleveland, found two frozen sea fish, a billet and a blennie, on a neighbour's drive (pictured above). "They looked frozen together," she said. "They had white marks on them that looked like ice crystals." The fish were found 10 miles (16km) from the sea, but two waterspouts had been reported the previous afternoon off the coast of nearby Redcar, so maybe the conventional fish-fall explanation fitted the bill in this case. "Finding fish this far inland is possible, so you can't rule it out," said Met Office national forecaster Steve Randall. "As to whether it is genuine, I'm not sure, as it isn't often that fish swim near the surface of the water." *Middlesbrough Eve. Gazette, 24 Oct 2003.*

RECORD HAILSTONE FOUND IN COFFEYVILLE

A record-size hailstone came to earth in Aurora, Nebraska, on 22 June. It was 7in (17.8cm) in diameter and 18.75in (47.6cm) in circumference. The stone was measured by the National Weather Service forecast office in Hastings, Nebraska, and verified by a team of weather forecasters. The previous record-holder had a diameter of 5.7in (14.5cm) and a circumference of 17.5in (44.5cm) and was found in Coffeyville, Kansas, on 3 Sept 1970. Those wondering how the *pi* was sliced should note that hailstones are rarely perfectly spherical. Jay Lawrence of the climate data centre said the Aurora hailstone was not the heaviest ever recorded. "It was hard for us to get an accurate weight for this stone because a chunk of it hit the gutter of a house and 40 per cent of it was lost," he said. "Also, we think some of the stone's mass might have melted before it was preserved in freezing conditions." *Wichita (KS) Eagle, 24 June; Independent on Sunday, 29 June; [AP] 2 Aug 2003.*

ARCHIVE GEM

TWIN STAR MONSTERS

When John Michell and Bob Rickard wrote *Living Wonders* (Thames & Hudson, 1982), they reproduced (on p.26) a curious letter to the *Times* (6 March 1980) in which a Professor Stuart Kirby gave his own interpretation of a belief among the Ainu aborigines of the Japanese island of Hokkaido: "...that long ago, when the world was new, twin stars fell from the sky. One came down to Lake Kutcharo, the other far away to the west – as we now know, into Loch Ness. Ever since, 'Kushie' [the monster of Lake Kutcharo] has been calling to [Nessie]... via the stars... assuring of her remembrance and longing to meet her sister again." Years later, Bob came across a news report of an actual meteorite over Loch Ness, in December 1842. It came down between Urquhart and Abriachan, at about 3:45am on the Friday before the report date. It travelled east to west in the air, emitting blue and green sparks. "The light was not glaring, yet it completely illuminated the neighbourhood." Some fishermen at Bunchrew likened it to "a gun spouting out fire". It appeared to "dissolve near the ground" with an immense detonation that echoed for several minutes along the rocky shores of the loch.
Apart from the fact that the vicinity of Urquhart Castle is possibly the main region of Nessie sightings, there was another detail which would have intrigued Charles Fort. Coincident with the fall of the meteorite there was an astonishing display of lightning. A sailor on watch on the steamer *Rob Roy*, lying near Corpach – near Fort William at the southern end of the Caledonian Canal – saw, "shortly before four o'clock... a great effusion of sheet lightning... nine flashes, so large and vivid, that he could distinctly see Fort William and Ben Nevis [two miles, 3.2km, away]." The report ends: "The night had been excessively dark and this illumination, which altogether occupied two or three minutes, struck him the more forcibly." *Inverness Courier, 14 Dec 1842.*

CP / NANAIMO DAILY NEWS / MARK BRETT

I'm a cat, get me outta here...

This young cat had been stuck up a 90ft (27m) pine in Nanaimo, British Columbia, for five days and all attempts to coax him down failed, so as a last resort tree topper Kevin Goode cut the branch on which he was sitting on 6 February 2003. The cat made a graceful dive from the branch and was caught by bystanders in a blanket, but managed to escape before being grabbed. It did not appear to be injured. ***Nanaimo (BC) Daily News, –Oct 2003.***

ALAMY/PIX

Copycat ailments

In a bizarre run of coincidences, Sarah Walker and her 12-year-old cat Ebony (left) have suffered a series of parallel ailments. In August 1997, Mrs Walker, 34, a factory stock controller from Saxmundham, Suffolk, fell off her motorbike and broke her right leg. A month later, Ebony was hit by a car and had to have his right back leg amputated. In 2001, Mrs Walker had a crooked wisdom tooth removed. Six weeks later, Ebony needed all his teeth extracted because he had gum disease.

On 1 October 2003, Mrs Walker had an operation to correct a squint in her left eye because she was suffering from double vision. Two weeks earlier, Ebony had his left eye removed because of complications from a burst ulcer. In the past, Ebony had spent 18 months taking hormone tablets because he was losing fur and getting sore skin – echoing his owner's hormone problems. Ebony also recently had a dose of cat flu which left him wheezing just like Mrs Walker does sometimes due to her mild asthma.

"I dread anything else going wrong with me in case something more serious happens to Ebony," said Mrs Walker. "He has lost so many body parts that he can't really afford to lose any more; but he can still hop along happily on his three legs." *D.Mail, 13 Oct 2003.*

SIDELINES...

SAFETY FIRST

Elcio Berti, mayor of Bocaiuva do Sul in Brazil, cancelled a planned landing by an alien spaceship during the Brazil v Peru football match in November because, he told Estado de Sao Paulo online, "I was worried they might abduct one of the Brazilian footballers". The mayor claims to be in regular touch with aliens and says they are helping to fund a UFO landing pad he's building in the town. *Ananova, 21 Nov 2003.*

HAUTE CUISINE

The girlfriend of a London journalist ordered a chilli con carne at the Aviemore ski resort in the Scottish Highlands in 2002. She was given a bowl of mince. When she asked for sour cream, the waiter returned with an aerosol of fake cream and sprayed it on top. When she complained that this wasn't sour cream, the waiter took out a plastic Jif lemon and squirted it on the cream. *London Eve Standard, 21 Aug 2003.*

PARROT BREAKS SILENCE

A retired policeman went out of his Kiev flat, leaving his parrot alone. When he returned after a few minutes, he found three would-be thieves stretched out on the floor with their hands behind their heads. They explained that when they came into the flat, they heard a voice say: "Stop! I'll shoot! On the ground!" The parrot, which had lived with the policeman for a year, had never spoken before the incident. All this according to the *Cegodnya* newspaper. *Ananova, 7 Oct 2003.*

RAT RUN

A woman from Hove, Sussex, had to call in the RSPCA when her six pet rats, which she had allowed the free run of her home, bred so fast that more than 100 infested the one-bedroom flat. *Brighton Argus, 2 Aug 2003.*

RODENT RETRIBUTION

A supermarket rat that had dodged poison traps for a month tried to steal a piece of cheese from an 80-year-old shopper. The woman described how a rat as big as her hand bit her finger at the store outside Brussels. She grabbed the creature and smashed it against the floor. *Independent, 17 Oct 2003.*

MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES...

GROWING TREND

Defending a man charged with cannabis possession in a Brisbane court on 20 October, solicitor Michael Gatenby was keen to show his client was a changed man. "He has gone to TAFE and completed a course in hydroponics," he said. Cue giggles throughout the courtroom. *Queensland Weekend Bulletin, 25-26 Oct 2003.*

POSTAL PANIC

There was a terrorist alert in Edmonton, Alberta, when a woman reported that a letter she was sent changed from white to pale yellow, and then brown. Hazardous chemical officers arrived and soon cracked the case: she'd put the letter down on an unseen coffee spill. *The Week, 11 Oct; Independent on Sunday, 12 Oct 2003.*

DOING HIS NUT

Art student Mark McGowan spent 11 days nudging a monkey nut through London with his nose, arriving at 10 Downing Street on 12 September. He flicked the nut onto PM Tony Blair's front step, and was greeted by an official who gave him a mug of tea. The 37-year-old went through 13 nuts during his seven-mile (11km) journey from Goldsmiths College in southeast London, undertaken to highlight rising student debt. *[R] 12 Sept 2003.*

NUT SCREWS NUT

A 46-year-old man from Oradea, Romania, named only as Janos, slipped an industrial nut over his penis to maintain an erection after seeing a porn star do the same in a film; but his penis began to swell until the nut was barely visible. Dr Gheorghe Bumbu from Bihor County Hospital, said: "I almost gave up hope of saving his penis when I realised that I could make several longitudinal cuts and let the blood out so the organ could deflate." *Ananova, 19 Aug 2003.*

MARTIN ROSS

Not so fast, Jani

Indian hospital tests sadhu's claims to have lived almost seventy years taking neither food nor water

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Prahlad Jani (right), a 76-year-old sadhu (Hindu monk) from the pilgrim town of Ambaji in the western Indian state of Gujarat, claims not to have eaten or drunk anything for the past 68 years. In November, after having been challenged to prove his claim, he travelled to the Sterling Hospital in Ahmedabad from the remote cave where he lives as a hermit. He maintains that his unusual talent was bestowed on him by the goddess Ambaji, who visited him when he was eight and told him of his calling. Since then, he has lived in caves in the remote countryside, dressed in the female costume of a devotee of Ambaji, a red sari-like garment, nose ring, bangles and crimson flowers in his greying hair. His austerities have won him a small band of followers, a number of whom travelled with him to the city and set up camp outside the hospital.

To test the holy man's claim, the Association of Physicians of Ahmedabad (APA) constituted a panel of 40 medical specialists. They had prepared a glass-walled room (reminiscent of David Blaine's transparent Thames-side box – see **FT178:5**), equipped with closed-circuit TV to monitor his activities. The lavatory adjacent to the room was sealed to test Jani's claim that he had no need to urinate or defecate. He agreed not to bathe for his time in hospital. The only fluid he was allowed was a small amount of water to use as mouthwash. One hundred millilitres of water was given to him and then collected and measured in a beaker when he spat it out, to make sure that none had been drunk. Hospital staff on rotation stayed inside the room round the clock.

Doctors had intended to halt the exercise after a week, but carried on after tests showed the sadhu to be in perfect health. He left hospital on 23 November after 11 days; the doctors were obliged to discharge him because of the mad rush of devotees seeking darshan (an audience with their guru). The experts were astounded that he had survived without drinking water or urinating. Most people can live without food for several weeks, with the body drawing on its fat and protein stores; but the average human can survive for only three to four days without water. "[Jani] has evidence of the formation of urine, which was reabsorbed on his bladder wall," said Dr Sudhir V Shah, the neurologist who oversaw the test. "The medical committee does not have any scientific explanation. Not passing urine and stool is a very striking phenomenon. This is a one-of-a-kind case."

Jani offered his own explanation for his alleged wild talent: "I get Amrut [the elixir of life] from the hole in my palate, which enables me to go without food and water," he said, adding that he had never fallen ill. Dr Dinesh Desai said the hospital hoped to test Jani again to verify his claim of a hole in the palate between his mouth and nose. The experts, of course, could neither prove nor disprove that he had fasted for nearly seven decades.

Dr Shah said it took the hospital more than a year to persuade Jani to undergo surveillance. He said he wanted the ascetic to undergo experiments at NASA, as his supposed ability could be useful for astronauts. A team of military doctors from the Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS) was due in Ahmedabad to see if there was anything they could learn that could be used to help improve the endurance of soldiers. On his discharge from hospital, Jani said he wanted to retreat to a cave at Mount Abu in the neighbouring desert state of Rajasthan, but was asked to stay in the city while doctors tried to solve the mystery. *(Melbourne) Herald Sun, 24 Nov; (London) Times, 26 Nov; [PTI] Sify, Hindustan Times, 27 Nov 2003.*

Hira Ratan Manek – also known as Hirachand – a 64-year-old mechanical engineer from the southern Indian state of Kerala, claims to have fasted for the last eight years, surviving exclusively on liquids and sunlight. He claimed to have stopped liking food in 1992. In 1995 he went on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas and stopped eating completely on his return. "Every evening he looks at the sun for one hour without batting an eyelid," said his wife Vimla. "It is his main food. Occasionally he takes coffee, tea or some other liquid." Manek said he "eats through his eyes" in the evening, when the sun's ultraviolet rays are least harmful. According to the a report in the *Hindustan Times*, Manek was in the US in June 2003 being tested by NASA, and US scientists had verified that Manek spent 130 days surviving only on water. They even named this subsistence on water and solar energy after him: the HRM (Hira Ratan Manek) Phenomenon. *[DPA] Bangkok Post, 30 June 2003.*

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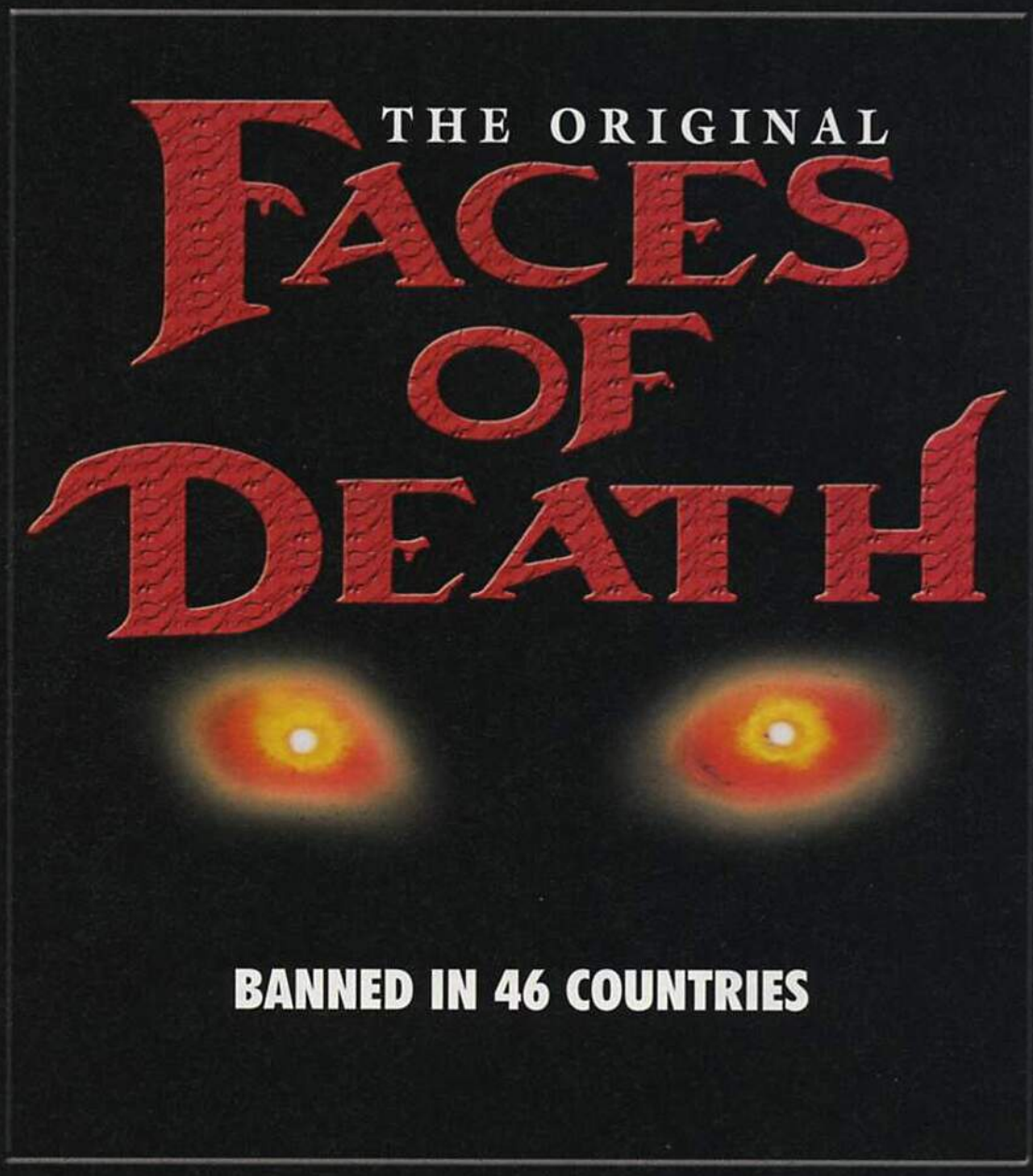

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SIDELINES...

MILLIPEDES STOP TRAIN

A train was brought to a halt in the mountains of western Japan near Osaka by a swarm of millipedes, up to 6cm (2.4in) long, which covered a 400 metre (1,312ft) shadowy upward stretch of track. The single-carriage train, carrying only two passengers, skidded to a halt after crushing enormous numbers of the white creatures. *[AFP] 12 Oct 2003.*

OSTENSION STRIKES

The urban legend of razor blades in public places came true for a 14-year-old girl when she tried on a pair of slippers in a shoe shop in Tamworth, New South Wales, on 6 September. A carefully placed razor blade sliced her toe, which required stitches. Another nine blades were found in a box on the floor. *Brisbane Courier-Mail, 9 Sept 2003.*

CRAB WEDDING

On 28 September, a mass wedding ceremony was held in Madras, southern India, to promote world peace. Among the lucky couples were two crabs. The ceremony was part of the Navrati festival, which last for nine days and is dedicated to Lord Rama. *[R] Times, 29 Sept 2002.*

AUTO-GRATIFICATION

General motors are hastily renaming a new car for the Canadian market after learning that LaCrosse is slang for masturbation in French-speaking Quebec. "I thought I knew every expression in the French language for self-gratification," said GM vice-chairman Bob Lutz. The car, due out late next year, will still be called the Buick LaCrosse in the US. *Ananova, 16 Oct 2003.*

SUSPECT POWDER

A Bolivian man spent two months in jail charged with smuggling cocaine before tests revealed it was talcum powder. Fernando Vásquez, 25, was arrested in July at a Chilean checkpoint. He told police he used the powder on his feet, but they didn't believe him, even though initial tests on the powder were negative for cocaine. *Ananova, 2 Oct 2003.*

The eye of the beholder

Latest Marian marvels in Coventry and in the USA, and Jesus seen in a tree

N SYNDICATION

SPLASH NEWS / KATE LILIENTHAL

APPARITIONS: Lisa Smyth of Coventry with the face she found under the wallpaper (left), and the tree trunk simulacrum seen in Passaic, New Jersey (right).

MARY (OR JESUS) OF THE MIDLANDS

Bank clerk Lisa Smyth, 31, was helping builders strip wallpaper during renovation work at her 90-year-old terraced house in Earlsdon, Coventry, when she spotted a face in the plaster. She sees it as the Virgin Mary, while her mother Maureen, 54, is convinced it is an image of Christ. A Catholic priest has blessed the house and the image will stay on permanent display in her living room. The face, of course, could be identified with any number of people. *The Sun* journalists suggested David Beckham or a Klingon. *Sun, 13 Aug 2003.*

MORE VIRGINS SEEN IN AMERICA

Believers are flocking to the intersection of Madison Street and Hope Avenue in Passaic, New Jersey – a largely Hispanic city about 15 miles (24km) west of New York – to see a tree stump resembling a veiled Virgin Mary with a bowed head. They say it is a divine sign of hope for the rundown neighbourhood.

Mariom Ruiz said she and her mother Nilma first spotted the 2ft (60cm) stump, etched with axe marks and surrounded with litter, while driving by on 18 October. Since then, a steady stream of visitors has left candles, plastic flowers and hand-written prayers at the site, once notorious as a hangout for junkies. Nilma Ruiz adorned the 'head' with a ring of silk flowers and some claimed to be able to smell their fragrant aroma. The stump had been created in early September, when Ronald Rosario and Miguel Tirado, local high school juniors, were paid to clear out a patch of dead trees at the intersection. "I remember [the stump] specifically," said Rosario, "because it took the longest to cut down."

Catholic authorities in New Jersey have refused to comment on the alleged miracle. Five years ago in nearby Jersey City, word of an image of the Virgin Mary on a freezer door drew people to a supermarket. That image, said to be a silhouette of a woman in a hooded garment, lasted four days. *Bergen Record (Hackensack NJ), 21+23 Oct; [R] 24 Oct; D.Mail, 30 Oct 2003.*

Another Virgin Mary simulacrum on a tree trunk near Avocado Lake in Fresno, California, drew crowds of the faithful in 2002. This focus for devotion came to an abrupt end on 5 September that year, when Bill Gaede, 69, a cattle owner residing nearby, took a chainsaw to the tree, allegedly yelling: "You Catholics, there's your virgin!" The police said he had committed no offence because there was no victim. *Fresno (CA) Bee, 7 Sept 2002.*

ARBOREAL APPARITION

A week before Christmas 2001, Ella Huffin, 63, saw an image of Jesus Christ on a tree in her back yard in northeast Milwaukee. "Seeing is believing," she said. "Once you see it yourself, you know it's not carved." A computer tracing of the image made it easier to see; the Son of God is looking down at a baby he's holding. Huffin received calls from all over the country. By the time of the report, more than 100 people had stopped by her home to see the tree. *Milwaukee News, 28 Jan 2002.*

Death toll shrinks again

The number of dead in the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, put at 6,453 two weeks after the attacks, has been steadily shrinking [see **FT157:9**]. The total excludes the hijackers, but includes 147 people killed on the two planes as well as firefighters and police who died during rescue efforts. In October 2003, a further 40 names were removed from the city's official death toll, bringing the figure down to 2,752 (22 less than the Associated Press estimate). The death toll in the Pentagon attack has shrunk from 189 to 184, and in the Pennsylvania crash of Flight 93 from 44 to 40. The reasons are the same as in past adjustments: the location of people once thought dead, duplication, insufficient data, and fraud. Police have arrested 40 people falsely claiming to have lost loved ones.

In many cases, investigators couldn't prove that a supposed victim ever existed. For instance, there was Paul Vanvelzer and his two sons, Barrett, four, and Edward, an infant who was thought for a while to be the twin towers disaster's youngest victim. It now appears that the Vanvelzers, reported missing by a Californian woman claiming to be a relative, might have died without ever having lived. *Austin (TX) American Statesman, 29 Oct; USA Today, 30 Oct; Sydney Daily Telegraph, 31 Oct 2003.*

• Another historical statistic that has recently shrunk is the epic Long March of the Chinese Red Army. In October 1934 about 100,000 men and women set out from Jianxi province to escape from Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists. About 6,000 were left when Chairman Mao Zedong's column marched into the north-western town of Wuqi 368 days later, the remainder having either deserted or died from the continual fighting, disease, or in the floods and swamps that barred the way.

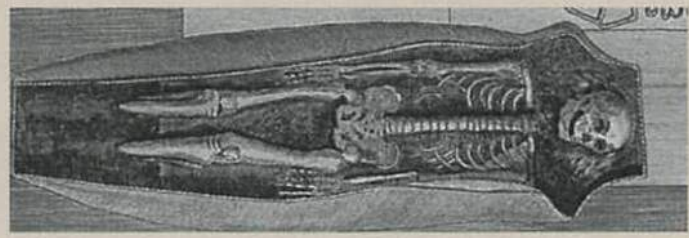
Two British backpackers – Ed Jocelyn, 35, and Andy McEwen, 37 – have become the first foreigners to retrace the entire path of the Long March, arriving to a tumultuous welcome in Wuqi on 3 November. They measured every day's journey and said the trip was about 7,000 km (4,350 miles), about 30 per cent shorter than the distance enshrined in official Communist history. A government spokesman scoffed at the claim. *[AP] Sydney Morning Herald, 5 Nov 2003.*

Royal pickle

The Royal Society of Chemistry is to try and discover the nature of a pool of unidentified liquid found in the lead coffin of King Edward IV (1442-83), Shakespeare's "Sun of York" (pictured below). The 7ft- (2m-) coffin was discovered by workmen in March 1789 as they prepared the ground for a new pavement in St George's Chapel, Windsor. The *Windsor Guide* of 1811 stated that the king's skeleton was "immersed in a glutinous liquid with which the body is thought to have been embalmed..." A footnote adds: "In contradiction to this, some philosophical gentlemen are of the opinion that the liquid and sediment... were simply water and earth, to which all bodies resolve." Before the tomb was secured, members of the public made off with a tooth, a finger, and a lock of hair from a tuft remaining on the skull.

In September 2003 an old journal was discovered in the library of the Society of Antiquaries. This stated that Dr James Lind, a physician at Windsor, likened the fluid to "walnut pickle" and said it was tasteless. The account included reports on a series of tests. One expert who is studying the records is forensic pathologist Professor Chris Milroy from the University of Sheffield.

"We don't know what this stuff is, but it doesn't seem to be any kind of embalming fluid. If that was the case, the remains would not have been so much of a skeleton," said a spokesman for the Royal Society of Chemistry. "Professor Milroy's initial thoughts are that the liquor was produced by the breakdown of body fat and muscle in an airtight environment. Kings of that time had special lead-lined coffins and would have resided in dry conditions." *Times, 29 Oct; Western Mail, 31 Oct 2003.*



SIDELINES...

CONMEN EXTRACTED

A network of fake dentists plying their trade in cafes and small shops out of suitcases equipped with drills and anæsthesia was crippled when 100 police mounted a pre-dawn raid on a Paris hotel, detaining 23 Syrians. They had been charging a quarter of qualified dentists' fees. *Queensland Weekend Bulletin, 13-14 Sept 2003.*

COME AND GET ME

In the small hours of 31 August, an inebriated thief fell asleep over the steering wheel of his stolen car, sounding the horn and waking up residents of Göteborg in Sweden. People threw eggs at the car from their bedroom windows, and eventually rang the police. The thief was arrested. *Götebors-Posten, 1 Sept; Malmö Metro, 2 Sept 2003.*

AVANT GARDE OR WHAT?

Mike Frantz from Iowa has set a new record in underwater pumpkin carving. He sculpted a face on a 1,028lb (466kg) specimen at a depth of 17ft (5m). America should be proud. *Independent on Sunday, 2 Nov 2003.*

BITING FRENZY

A 13-month-old boy was bitten 30 times by a group of more than 13 other babies at a nursery in Lovran, Croatia, after the class nanny stepped out of the room to change another baby's nappy. Frane Simic was covered in a series of deep bite wounds all over his body, including his face. Dr Sime Vuckov, head of the hospital in Rijeka which treated the boy, had never seen anything like it. The nanny was charged with negligence. *Sky News, 23+27 Oct 2003.*

MARTIN ROSS

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science

This month DAVID HAMBLING looks at the unifying theory of everything – it's all swamp gas, folks!

On swampy ground

Marsh gas explains everything. A whole range of paranormal phenomena, from ghosts and goblins to flying saucers and spontaneous human combustion, have been put down to marsh gas, but it is only recently that scientists have been able to agree on how these phenomena could occur.

The most common marsh apparition is will o' the wisp, a light like a moving lantern. Traditionally the light is said to belong to a malevolent spirit or goblin, trying to lure unwary travellers into the marsh. These spirits boast regional names across Britain, from Peg-a-Lantern in Lancashire to Hinky Punk in Devon and the Lantern Man in East Anglia. A West Country name, Jack o' Lantern, was adopted in the US, while scholarly writers called it *Ignis Fatuus* (foolish fire).

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

These spirits were dangerous. As well as leading you into trackless marshes, some could take away your breath. According to Norfolk lore, "If the Lantern Man light upon you, the best thing is to throw yourself flat on your face and hold your breath."

They are similar in appearance to "corpse candles", flickering lights sometimes seen in churchyards, and believed to be the souls of the dead that have not yet departed. Another tradition says that those drowned in the River Dee can be located by a light appearing over the water by the body.

Such superstitions were found to have some scientific basis in the 18th century when it was discovered that decaying material produced flammable methane gas (CH_4). Smothering marsh gases could also account for the Lantern Man's breath-stealing. If the methane from rotting vegetation were to spontaneously catch fire, it would produce flickering lights like the will o' the wisp, but there was no ready explanation as to why marsh gas would ignite in this way.

The situation is confused by the light emitted by phosphorescent fungi, common in warmer climes and also associated with decay and marshes. In the US, such glowing fungi are sometimes called foxfire [1], a term also applied to marsh lights. One species of glowing toadstool is even called Jack O'Lantern to further confuse matters.

Perhaps the most notorious use of "swamp gas" to explain strange phenomena occurred in March 1966. Eighty-seven witnesses at Hillsdale College, Michigan, watched a glowing object shaped like a football hovering over a nearby swampy area. It approached the women's dormitory, and then retreated before disappearing. The next day, five witnesses including two police officers saw a second glowing object some miles away.

They watched a glowing football-shaped object hovering nearby

Dr J Allan Hynek, the astronomy consultant to the US Air Force's "Project Blue Book" investigating UFO sightings, suggested in a press conference that one possible explanation of the lights was swamp gas. The press and public ridiculed Hynek and swamp gas became something of a national joke. Unthinking scepticism gained a new name, as in the UFO newsletter *Swamp Gas Journal* and Patrick Huyghe's *Swamp Gas Times*.

Congressman Gerald Ford, later to become President, objected that "the American public deserve a better explanation". This led to the first Congressional hearings on UFOs. Hynek was profoundly affected by the reaction, which forced him to take a more open stance. "From that point on," he later said. "I began to look at reports from a different angle, which was to say that some of them could be true UFOs."

Meanwhile, the question remained as to what might cause marsh gases to burn. In 1879, JFW Johnston and AH Church observed that phosphine, a phosphorous compound (PH_3) which is spontaneously flammable in air, can be produced by the decay of animal material. However, there was some debate about whether marsh bacteria could produce phosphine.

The argument continued throughout the 20th century. In 1995, one group of scientists published a paper "Evidence for phosphine production and emission from Louisiana and Florida marsh soils" showing that phosphine was produced by bacteria; in the same year a different study showed that bacteria actually absorbed phosphine and reduced the concentration of the gas.

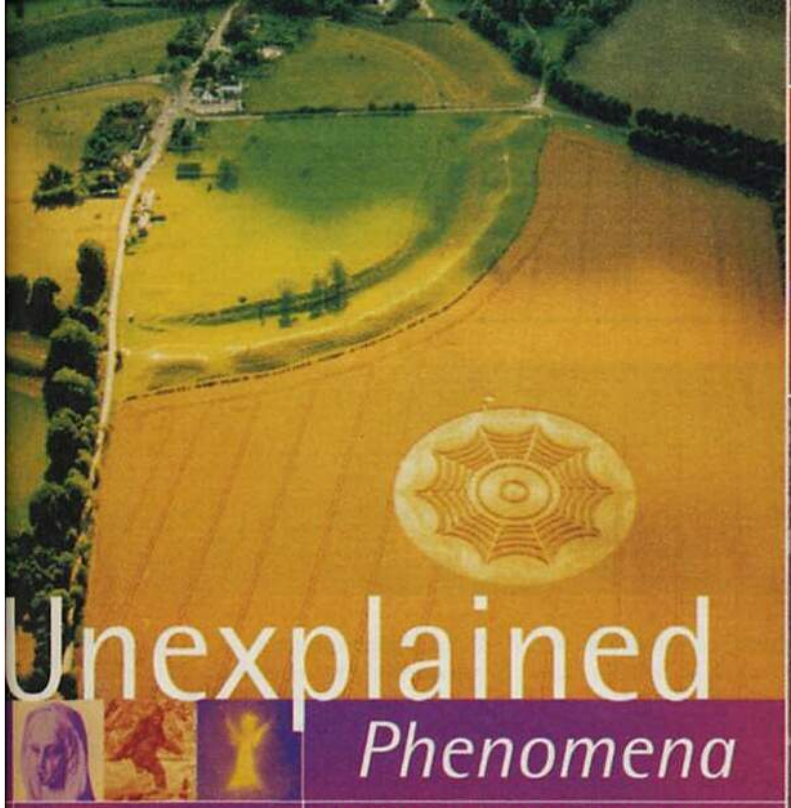
The matter was not settled until 1996 when a new low-temperature technique was used to extract and measure the tiny amounts of phosphine from air samples. This showed that there were increased levels of phosphine associated with landfill sites, sewage processing and compost – in fact anywhere with large amounts of bacteria which cause decay without oxygen.

Dietmar Glindemann, who has studied the production of phosphine and diphosphine by human fæcal bacteria, has even suggested this might be the underlying cause of spontaneous human combustion. The gases could ignite the methane in human flatulence; if other flammable material (e.g. clothing) were present, the unfortunate person involved could be mysteriously burned to death. Glindemann suggests that an appropriate term for this would be *ignis flatus*.

The mysterious dancing marsh lights have been explained – more or less – though whether they could be responsible for the Hillsdale sighting remains doubtful. Phosphine has been put to practical use, and is now used for fumigating grain. At low levels it is safe enough, but if it reaches high concentration it will spontaneously ignite. When there is also a high level of grain dust in the air, this ignition can cause the dust to catch fire and explode with sufficient force to destroy a grain silo. Phosphine is by no means harmless, and the Lantern Man is still a tricksy and dangerous spirit.

NOTE

1 Curiously, although the American term originally came from Europe, there is a Japanese equivalent. *Kitsune-Bi*, ("fox spirit fire") refers to the lights seen on marshes supposedly made by mischievous fox spirits.



Unexplained Phenomena

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† FOR ALL THE SAINTS

FORTEAN TALES FROM THE CHURCH
COMPILED BY GRENADINE GRAY

THIS MONTH: St Simeon Stylites the Elder († 459)

On 5 January the feast is celebrated of St Simeon Stylites the Elder, the David Blaine of the ancient world.

Simeon was born in Syria, and worked as a shepherd boy until the age of 13, when he became a monk. Even as a young man he was austere. He deliberately left his first monastery for a stricter one at Tel Ada, but even there he out-fasted his brother monks. When his secret discipline – a rope of palm leaves tightly bound about his waist – caused a bad infection, it was felt he had gone too far. He was expelled.

Simeon moved to Telanissos, a hermitage near a mountain, where he spent three years. Here he began his lifelong practice of spending each Lent (40 days) entirely without food or drink.

Acquiring a reputation as a miracle worker, he moved from the foot of the mountain to a roofless enclosure at the summit. Even here he found himself pestered by visitors, perhaps due to his practice of chaining himself to the rocks. To withdraw still further, he decided to live on the column that provided his nickname (from stulos, the Greek for 'pillar'). This was increased in height over time from 10 to 67 ft (3 to 20m). It was only 6ft (1.8m) in diameter, with no chair, so that to rest from standing he could only lean or crouch. He wore an iron collar and made regular bows of reverence.

Though he clearly wished to escape from the world, the spectacle of a man on a pillar was irresistible. Simeon became an evangelist despite himself, preaching every day to crowds of Bedouins, Persians, Armenians and Georgians. Persian kings and Roman emperors consulted him. Visitors were men only – Simeon would not allow women within the enclosure where his column stood.

In all, Simeon spent 37 years of his life on pillars. Though one could dismiss him as a mad fanatic, he was known for being patient, gentle and kind. His practices irritated some of his contemporaries, certain local bishops accusing him of pride and vanity. The Church historian Evagrius, who visited Simeon's relics around AD 580, relates that the saint was afflicted by the devil with an ulcer on his leg in punishment for complacency. As penance, Simeon never again touched his injured limb to the ground; for the last year of his life he stood on one leg. After his death his pillar became the focus of a pilgrimage centre, whose ruins still stand today.

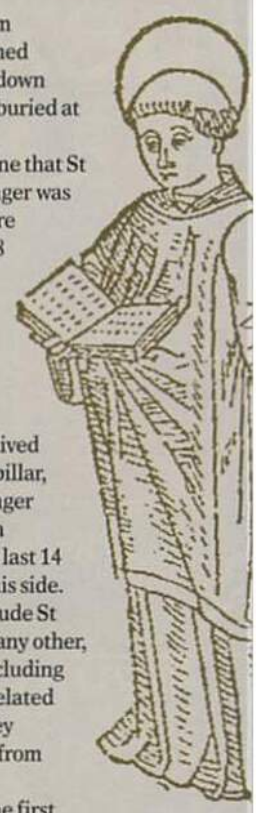
Blaine is not Simeon's only imitator – the practice extended for many centuries, until around 1100 in the East and 1461 in the Russian Orthodox Church. The first to live the high life after Simeon was his disciple, St Daniel Stylites. Daniel lived on a platform supported by two conjoined columns, and only came down once in 33 years. He was buried at the foot of his pillar.

It is tempting to imagine that St Simeon Stylites the Younger was installed up a pole – where Evagrius says he spent 68 years – to keep him out of harm's way. In his youth he had brought a baby leopard home to the hermit he served, thinking it was a cat.

St Alypius the Stylite lived 53 years standing on his pillar, until his legs could no longer support him. Rather than descending, he spent the last 14 years of his life lying on his side.

Later pillar saints include St Luke the Younger and many other, less famous, hermits – including women, though it is not related whether, like Simeon, they banned the opposite sex from their enclosures.

Though Simeon was the first Christian hermit to live at the top of a column, he may not have initiated the practice: Lucian wrote of pagans who ascended a pillar near Hieropolis twice yearly, to spend a week talking with their gods.



SHORTS

PHOTO ARCHIVE DOOMED

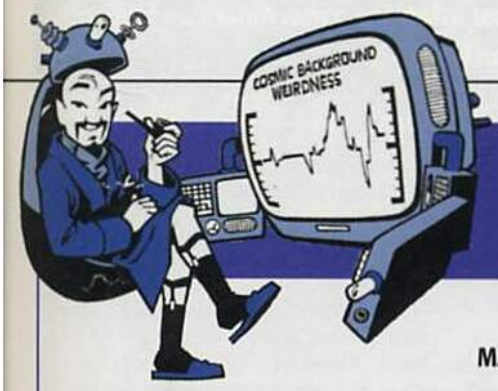
The archives of American Media, the publisher of *National Enquirer*, *Star* and other supermarket tabloids – including about five million photographs of stunning, shocking, exclusive, tragic, spine-tingling, enigmatic and bizarre images – are destined for destruction. "It was a phenomenal library," said Kathleen Cottay, American Media's chief librarian, standing at the single file drawer that hold the few hard-copy photos in the company's new offices, just across the highway from the old building in Boca Raton, Florida. "Everyone used to call us for stuff."

Two years ago, a still-unidentified biological terrorist contaminated the company's headquarters with anthrax, killing a *National Enquirer* photo editor and provoking international dread. In April 2003, developer David Rustine bought the star-crossed building on the condition that he destroy the contents. The price was $40,000 (£23,000), seemingly a bargain considering that before the scare the newly renovated building was valued at $15 million (£8,620,000). The Environmental Protection Agency found anthrax spores throughout the three-storey building late in 2001, and officials of the agency say the spores can become more potent over time. *Houston (TX) Chronicle, 24 Aug 2003.*

'TIGER-WOMAN' CAUSES RIOT

About 50 people were arrested in Iran's clerical capital of Qom around 9 November after police broke up a crowd that had assembled to watch the hanging of a half-woman half-tigress. According to a report in the *Jomhuri-Eslami* newspaper, a large crowd turned up in a city square, only to be met by police who attempted to convince the would-be spectators that the bizarre rumour was unfounded. As security forces attempted to disperse them, they smashed several windows in nearby buildings.

The initial rumour was that a woman had "insulted religious values" during Ramadan and as divine punishment had had her head turned into that of a ferocious feline. "Drawings of the woman with the head of a tigress were even distributed in the city, especially in schools," said a journalist who asked not to be named. "The rumour was that she was to be hanged." According to local folklore, the insulting of Islamic values during the fasting month is particularly serious, and sinners risk having their head turned into that of an animal. *[AFP] 10 Nov 2003.*



The Hierophant

IN HIS FORTRESS OF ARROGANCE, DEEP BELOW THE HIMALAYAS, THE IMMORTAL ASCENDED MASTER KNOWN AS THE HIEROPHANT TRAVELS THE MORE DISREPUTABLE PATHS OF FORTEANA...

There would appear to be something in the air at the moment which is prompting unaccustomed openness on the part of traditionally somewhat secretive organisations. Perhaps inspired by our own recent opening of our archives to display some of the more egregious communications we have received over the years, no less a body than the FBI has chosen to share portions of what it refers to as its "Zero Files". As you might imagine, the FBI gets rather more than its fair share of letters and such from the differently sane; being the bureaucracy that it is, each of these must be files, no matter how thoroughly spurious, and so were born the Zero Files, files from which it is believed nothing of use is to be gleaned and on which no further action is to be taken. Although why anyone would wish to ignore information as vital as "[i]t turns out every one of the products on the market take part in this so-called government training. The Folgers jar classic roast is capital F for Federal means gov't, FO LGE RE is broke into 3 sections FO is ENEMY RS is ours and LGE backwards is EGL sounds out EAGLE says gov't our enemy." Obviously. More, for those who want it – and our vast network of invisible mind-reading microwave lasers tells us a lot of you do – at http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2003/11/30/BAGTO3D4VH1.DTL

Something else traditionally in the air at this time is the thought of holidays. Sadly we are just a smidgen too late in bringing you news of what sounds to be a quite refreshing little break, the awkwardly-named "First Annual Global Ceremony of Lightworkers For Planet Earth & A WEEKEND WITH STARDOVES AT ANCIENT LEMURIAN SEA CAVES & ENCHANTED REDWOOD FORESTS" (sic), which occurred at the end of November in an unspecified, but no doubt highly mystical, location in the United States. It certainly sounded like a bargain; for a mere $222 (£128) not including hotel or travel, one could benefit not only from a pilgrimage of some nature, but five full days and four full nights of Activations, Initiations and "lightworker ceremonies", whatever they may be. This Stardoves crew seem a sensible bunch – sensible enough, at least, to boast on their front page of having "won the prestigious 'GOLDEN WEB AWARD!'" presented to them by the IAWMD, an on-line organisation whose recognition of quality is widely claimed to be commensurate with the amount of money one is willing to give them... but, I ramble. No doubt similar holidays will be available in the future; why not check out http://www.stardoves.com and be not a little frightened.

Readers of the *Observer* Sunday newspaper will be familiar with the "Barefoot Doctor", who dispenses health advice in their magazine supplement. (Indeed, a brief process of consultation within the Hierophant's social circle suggests that a great many former *Observer* readers are all too aware of the "Doctor".) One might think it curious that they have not seen fit to give much publicity, even after the event, to a recent web-chat with the "Doctor" himself. That is, one might think so until one experiences the extraordinary pleasure of reading it for oneself. One 'Sammy' kicks off proceedings with "Do you really believe everything you recommend or do you think 'lumme, I've no idea, you're probably dead meat' and then recommend a good rubdown with a spiritual pebble or something because that's what you DO." Things go downhill quite rapidly from this point; next up is a 'TommyDGNR8', who wants to know, "Given that 95% of what you preach is superstitious nonsense and that the *Observer* effectively pays you to plug your products (available at an incredibly over-inflated price at a Boots near you!), how do you sleep at night?" To which the "Doctor" snaps back with "thankyou for asking – generally on my right side so the blood can go more easilly into my liver [...] it's advisable as it tends to prevent an overload of blood to the heart, which would produce unsettling dreams and possibly even waking delusions the next day" (sic, throughout). A good deal more at:
http://talk.guardian.co.uk/WebX?128@@.685e9480
if your sides can take it.

KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF *LOBSTER*, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER

So the 40th anniversary of JFK's assassination came and went without a great deal of fuss in this country. BBC2 ran a documentary made by ABC in America, with a voice-over for British audiences by the BBC's Gavin Esler, which restated the Oswald-lone-nutter-dunnit version of reality first proposed by the Warren Commission in 1964. In this programme, *none* of the points raised in any of the many critiques that have emerged since 1964 were included and a great deal of effort was spent rubbishing Oliver Stone's 1992 movie *JFK* – as if that *was* the only post-Warren Commission critique. The documentary was staggeringly, hilariously awful. I must be mellowing though: 20 years ago it would have made me angry. Now, I just sat giggling at it. There it all was again: Oswald did the shooting with his $16 mail order rifle with inaccurate sights. (Of course the 'inaccurate sights' bit was omitted.) Oswald, the attention-seeking teenage Marxist, joined the US Marine Corps – that well known bastion of liberal attitudes – and so on. Astonishing nonsense, all hinging on – you guessed it – a computer model of the event. So it must be true!

Did someone say garbage in and garbage out? In response, a website has been set up in the US, documenting ABC's long involvement in telling lies about the Kennedy assassination: www.abclies.com/

Gavin Esler wrote a piece for the BBC News website as a trailer for the documentary, which also contained many factual errors and distortions by omission. As far as one can see, in the eight years Esler spent in the US as the BBC's correspondent there, he learned nothing at all about the subject; but – crucially – he did learn that respectable opinion didn't take it seriously and ignorance was no bar to comment. There's something about the Kennedy assassination that seems to tell mainstream journalists they don't need to do any research, that there are no 'facts'; that all opinions are equally valid. Go figure!

Beyond the confines of that American-dominated media world, however, there has been quite a bit of activity. In France, the 40th anniversary has seen a TV documentary, *JFK, Autopsie D'Un Complot*, which has been shown three times so far, a best-selling book and an edition of *Paris-Match* magazine which had to be reprinted and sold over a million copies – all devoted to the LBJ-dunnit thesis which was aired in **FT 176:32-36** . This one, as people like Mr Esler would say, has got legs.

WWW.EYEPORT.CO.UK

alien zoo

DR KARL SHUKER records a reptilian surprise, another attempt to return a lost avian and a new American felid with a distinctly Caledonian look to it...

Under our noses...

BRUCE COLEMAN COLLECTION

GREEN GROW THE LIZARDS-O!

Generally up to 1ft (30cm) long, the green lizard *Lacerta viridis* is much larger than any native species of British lizard – always, assuming, of course, that it is not itself of UK nationality. Although common on the European continent and also the Channel Islands, attempts in the past to establish colonies on mainland Britain have failed, presumably because our cooler climate is not to this species' liking.

Now, however, a discovery has been made that could shatter both of these fondly-held preconceptions. At the end of August 2003, reptile expert Dr Chris Gleed-Owen revealed that he had encountered what appears to be a thriving, breeding population of green lizards that he estimates may number in the hundreds, living in a 200 sq yard (167 sq m) area of cliff in the Bournemouth region of Dorset. Ironically, he found them only 100 yards (90m) or so from the Herpetological Conservation Trust's office, yet they had not been reported there before.

Their origin remains controversial. It may be that they are the descendants of a few pet specimens abandoned or deliberately released by persons unknown some time ago. More exciting, conversely, is the possibility that they represent a hitherto-overlooked native population, dating back 10,000 years. *D.Mail, 29 Aug 2003.*

BRING BACK THE BUSTARD

An even more startling addition to the British fauna may well be one of the world's heaviest flying birds. Once a common species over much of Britain, the crane-related but much heftier, burlier great bustard *Otis tarda* was a popular target for hunting parties, especially as its roasted flesh was tasty and plentiful enough in an adult male (weighing up to 35lb/16kg) to feed up to 16 diners. Coupling this with habitat destruction due to farming, its days were numbered, and by 1832 the great bustard had been wiped out in Britain, though it still survives in mainland Europe.

Starting in 1970, a plan was launched to re-establish it, via a semi-captive population maintained on Wiltshire's Salisbury Plain, but this ultimately failed. Now, however, a second attempt is to be made, again on Salisbury Plain, after the British government granted a licence for a trial reintroduction. Next May, 40 chicks from Russia will be shipped to the UK, where they will be quarantined and then reared in protective pens on the plain, before being released in autumn once they can fly. Forty more could be introduced in the same way each year afterwards for the next decade. *D.Mail, Wolverhampton Express & Star, 4 Nov 2003.*

BRUCE COLEMAN COLLECTION

The cat came back...

ANDREW BARKER/FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY

The Kellas cat of northern Scotland, first publicly reported during the early 1980s, proved to be an introgressive hybrid (i.e. resulting from several generations of crossbreeding) of domestic cat and Scottish wildcat. Intriguingly, however, some odd feral domestics have been reported from North Carolina, that sound very reminiscent of the Caledonian Kellas, even though there are presumably no Scottish wildcats living in the wild over there.

In November 2003, I learnt from Ben Willis via the MysteryCats@yahoogroups.com online discussion group that from the early 1990s onwards, he has encountered a number of black Kellas-like felids around coastal North Carolina. He estimated one such specimen to be twice the size of an ordinary domestic cat, and he was even able to capture and rear a second one from kittenhood, which he described as being "considerably larger than a domestic, with white guard-hairs, a kinked tail, and extraordinarily large canine teeth". The white guard-hairs and unusually large canine teeth are familiar Kellas cat features, and the kinked tail suggests that this particular specimen may have had Siamese cat ancestry – which has also been mooted in the past for the Kellas cat.

Ben states that there is another of these odd cats presently roaming the woods near his home, which he describes as having "the same coat as the others, and... a small white star on his chest" – as do the Kellas cats. The existence of such creatures in an area bereft of Scottish wildcats indicates that the Kellas cat's distinctive features may owe more to its domestic (as opposed to its Scottish wildcat) ancestors than previously supposed. *Ben Willis, MysteryCats@yahoogroups.com 12 Nov 2003.*

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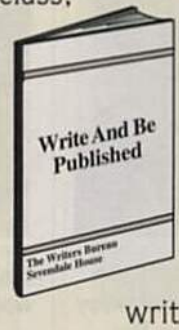

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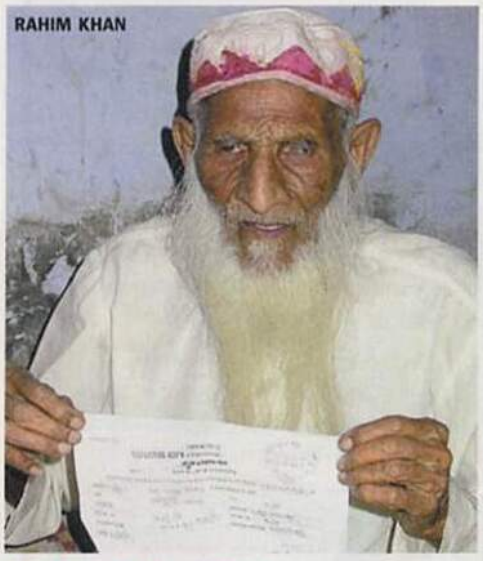
I hope I'm old before I die

The undisputed oldest person ever was the Frenchwoman Jeanne Louise Calment (1875-1997) who was 122 years and 164 days old. Many claim to have lived longer, but incontrovertible documentary proof is lacking. Still, some of them might not be exaggerating. **Paul Sieveking** reviews the latest super-wrinklies. ● **RECOGNISED BY GUINNESS**


RAHIM KHAN

REUTERS

ZABANI KHAKIMOVA

ITAR-TASS PHOTOS / NEWSCOM

SEK YI

RAHIM KHAN (125+)

better known to friends and family as Habib Miyan, lives in Jaipur, Rajasthan, surrounded by 32 members of his extended family. He was a clarinettist for nearly 40 years in Jaipur's state band, which played for a succession of rulers. He retired on 1 June 1938. His pension records held by the Rajasthan government say that he was born on 20 May 1878 – but he believes that he could be older by as much as seven years. He has no birth certificate (that was common in rural India) but he says his father registered him when he was eight in the Muslim calendar year 1300. It is now 1424. He lost his eyesight 50 years ago and has outlived his wife and three sons by many years. His teeth are long gone, but he claims to be growing new ones. He is frail and bedridden, but is otherwise in good health. He is a devout Muslim and has never touched alcohol or tobacco.

ZABANI KHAKIMOVA (124+)

lives in the south-western Achkhoi-Martan region of Chechnya. Last July, Chechen deputy health minister Sultan Alimkhadzhiyev told the Interfax news agency that she was the oldest person on Earth. She endured Stalin's mass deportation of her people to Kazakhstan in 1942 after they were accused of collaborating with the Nazis. They were ravaged by disease and starvation before being allowed to return home. During this period, Mrs Khakimova lost her husband and four of her six children (or eight of her 10 children).

Her oldest son, Akhadan, died in 2001 and is survived by his 14 children. Her youngest son, Mokhdan, who is still alive, has 10 children. Mrs Khakimova also has 38 great-grandchildren and seven great-great-grandchildren. She is still happy to baby-sit and tend her vegetable garden. Her only complaint is that she has had problems with her hearing over the past couple of years. She attributes her longevity to hard work, simple food and clean mountain air. A devout Muslim, she prays five times a day. She insists that she was born in 1879, but researchers have failed to pin down the actual date.

SEK YI (122+)

This Cambodian tiger-hunter and martial arts expert died in his sleep after a short illness and was buried on 27 October 2003 in his village, Tuk Young, about 120 miles (193km) from Phnom Penh. He attributed his longevity and that of his wife Long Ouk, 108 (or 111), to smoking and their Buddhist faith. "When I was young I used to chew betel," he said, "but people made fun of me, saying I was like a woman, so I took up smoking." He is said to have chain-smoked hand-rolled cigarettes. His records were destroyed by the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s, but his friends and relations believe he was born in 1881.

Other super-centenarians claiming to have reached 122 include Dora Jacobs from the Eastern Cape in South Africa, who died on 19 January 2003, and Youssef Mohamed Attia al-Chadhli, a carpenter from the town of Damietta on Egypt's Mediterranean coast, who died a few days later. Hava Rexha, who lived all her life in the Albanian village of Shushice, allegedly turned 123 on 14 August 2003 and died in November. Fneikher Diab al-Fawaz, a former tribal judge in Jordan's Badiya region, died in August 2002 at the alleged aged of 125.

HASSAN SAEED AKSH (120+)

According to a report in the *Gulf News Daily*, this former diver from the United Arab Emirates avoided hospitals all his life. On 18 August 2003, he was admitted to hospital for a minor stomach operation only to die a few hours after surgery. His sons said he was extremely healthy and alert despite his years, and attributed his longevity to a diet of dates, fish, natural honey and coffee.

● KAMATO HONGO (116yrs 45 days)

was born on 16 September 1887 in Isen on Tokunoshima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture at the southern tip of Japan's Kyushu island, and died in Kagoshima City on 31 October 2003. She had been the Guinness candidate for the world's oldest person since the death of Maude Farris-Luse in Michigan in March 2002 (see **FT160:16**. Incidentally, the Michigan matriarch's recipe for longevity was boiled dandelion greens.)

During the last few years, Hongo was bedridden and slightly deaf, but otherwise in good health. She would sleep for two days and then stay awake for two days. A keen sake drinker, she attributed her great age to green tea, a loving family when she was a child and "an ordinary life". She had seven children – three of whom predeceased her – 27 grandchildren, 57 great-grandchildren and 11 great-great-grandchildren. Her husband died when she was 77. Japanese women enjoy the highest average life expectancy in the world with an average lifespan of 85 years in

2002 (for men, it was 78 years). By the end of September 2003, Japan had 20,561 centenarians.

SANTIAGO LAZARO PEREZ (115+)

This Mexican fruit farmer, thought by his family to be 115, might be the oldest suicide on record. According to his son, Andres Prez de la Cruz, he had hernias and complained of intense pain. On 26 July 2002, he went out to his garden in the Gulf coast state of Tabasco and hanged himself.

Another supposed 115-year-old Mexican was Eulalia Herrera, a Mayan Indian, who was born on 12 February 1887, in Valladolid, according to *La Jornada* newspaper. She drank beer and aguardiente, a strong sugar cane alcohol, mixed with soft drinks, every day. She died in April 2002, leaving two daughters, 10 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren, and 30 great-great-grandchildren.

YUKICHI CHUGANJI (114YRS 189 DAYS)

was born in a farming village on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu on 23 March 1889 and died on 28 September 2003 in Ogoori City, Kyushu, where he lived with his 74-year-old daughter and her family. He worked as a silkworm breeding instructor and later as a banker. He married in 1914 and had four sons and a daughter, seven grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

He assumed the Guinness-approved mantle of world's oldest man on the death of Antonio Todde in Sardinia in January 2002 [**FT160:17**]. He had been in good health, but had not ventured from his bed very often in recent years because of poor eyesight. He never touched alcohol, preferring a daily glass of milk, hard toffee and the occasional apple juice. His favourite meal was chicken with boiled rice. "He hates vegetables," his daughter once said.

ADELINA DOMINGUES (114YRS 183DAYS)

was born in the Cape Verde Islands in the Atlantic on 19 February 1888. The daughter of an Italian pilot and a Portuguese woman, she married merchant marine captain Jose Domingues at the age of 17 and moved with him to the United States in 1907. She never smoked or drank alcohol, and died in San Diego, California, on 21 August 2002, the world's second oldest Guinness-approved person after Kamato Hongo.

CHRISTINA COCK (114YRS 142DAYS)

the oldest Australian ever, died in a Melbourne nursing home on 22 May 2002. She lived all her life in Victoria and was married to Wilbert Cock for 72 years. [**FT160:17**].

KAMATO HONGO

PA PHOTOS / EPA

YUKICHI CHUGANJI

PA PHOTOS / EPA

ELANA SLOUGH (114YRS 89 DAYS)

was born Elena Rodenbaugh in a log cabin in Horsham, Pennsylvania, on 8 July 1889, according to US census records – although her family say the date was 4 July 1888, citing health insurance records and an affidavit signed by her mother in 1945. Her first husband died in the influenza pandemic of 1918 and her second passed away in 1936. She drank alcohol only once in her life and never smoked. She died in a New Jersey nursing home on 5 October 2003, three days after her 90-year-old daughter, Wanda Allen, died at the same facility.

MITOYO KAWATE (114YRS 182DAYS)

held the Guinness world longevity title for two weeks following the death of Kamato Hongo. She was born on 15 May 1889 and died of pneumonia in the western Japanese city of Hiroshima on 13 November 2003. Mrs Kawate, who is survived by two of her four children, was still working every day on her farm until she was 100. The new title-holder is Charlotte Benkner from Ohio, who was born in Leipzig on 16 Nov 1889 and emigrated to the US in 1896.

MARY CHRISTIAN (113YRS 312DAYS)

Mary Dorothy Christian was born in Taunton, Massachusetts, on 12 June 1889 and moved with her family to San Pablo, across the bay from San Francisco, at the age of 10. She married in 1907 and had two sons, whom she outlived, but her family includes 14 grandchildren and more than 309 great-grandchildren. She enjoyed junk food and lived alone until she turned 102. She became the oldest living American in November 2002 after the death of Mary Parr of Florida, who was also 113. She died of pneumonia in a nursing home in San Pablo on 20 April 2003. The title then passed to Elana Slough.

JOHN MCMORRAN (113 YRS 249DAYS)

was born in a log cabin on 19 June 1889 and died in Lakeland, Florida, on 24 February 2003. Allegedly the oldest man in the USA, he considered coffee his elixir and quit smoking cigars at the age of 97.

JOAN RIUDAVETS MOLL (113+)

became the Guinness candidate for oldest man on the death of Yukichi Chuganji last September. He was born on 15 December 1889, lives on the Mediterranean island of Menorca and sleeps up to 14 hours a day. He worked in the family shoemaking business before retiring in 1954. He has three daughters, five grandsons and six great-grandchildren.

LUCY D'ABREU (111+)

who lives at the Annfield House nursing home in Stirling, Scotland, became Britain's oldest person on 30 October 2002 with the death of Jessamine Nicholls of Chichester. She was born Lucy Victoria d'Souza in Dharwar, southern India, on 24 May 1892, the daughter of the head clerk in a government forestry office. Her brother became the first Indian bishop of Mangalore and she is a lifelong Catholic.

She married Dr Abundius Joseph d'Abreu, who opened a surgical practice in Waterford, introducing one of the first X-ray machines in Ireland. He died in 1971 and his widow remained in Waterford for a further 14 years, living independently until she was 93. She has five daughters, 13 grandchildren, "scores" of great-grandchildren and "numerous" great-great-grandchildren scattered across the globe. She attributes her longevity to "my customary sundowner of brandy and dry ginger ale".

SOURCES

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For earlier longevity listings, see **FT49:18-19, 50:9, 78:39-43, 89:14-15, 103:7, 112:14, 134:18-19, 141:8, 160:16-17.**

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The camera never lies?

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BRAZIL NUTS?

On 16 January 1958, photographer Almiro Barauna took six pictures of a Saturn-shaped UFO from the deck of the Brazilian Navy vessel *Almirante Saldanha* off the coast of rocky Trindade Island in the Atlantic Ocean. The Trindade photographs have since joined the ranks of 'classic' UFO photographs adduced as evidence of a physical, alien, craft. Now a vitriolic argument has arisen among ufologists, fuelled by doubts about the witness and claims that the photographs were a hoax. *www.strbrasil.com/ca/trindadehoax.htm*

Almost immediately a vigorous defence was mounted by those who believe Barauna's photographs to be the real thing. Among them was US researcher Brad Sparks, who claimed he could miraculously infer complex information about the 'object's' rotational speed, among other measurements – merely from looking at the photographs! This appears to be no less than a mathematical version of a Rorschach blot test, as it's not actually proven that the photographs depict a solid, moving object.

Hoaxes have been endemic in ufology since the 1950s, and many so-called classic UFO photographs have since been proven to be fakes. Others, such as the McMinville photos, while not revealed as hoaxes, have also been seriously called into question. UFO photographs are not, in themselves, proof that a physical object was seen, yet they are accepted as such by many ufologists and questioning their veracity is guaranteed to cause problems.

The new furore has also raised questions not only about the integrity of the photographs, but of the original investigation of the case. One of

Hoaxes have been endemic since the 1950s

the key points seems to be whether Barauna was on the ship's deck when the UFO was initially seen. Contemporary interviews with him indicate he was, yet some Brazilian ufologists are disputing his original testimony. Claims that there were at least 48 other witnesses remain unsubstantiated, but if just one of them could come forward, new light may be shed on the case. Incredibly, though, this very absence of witnesses is being used by supporters of the case. American ufologist Jerry Clarke has argued that the fact none of these (possibly non-existent) witnesses have come forward is 'negative evidence' that the case is not a hoax. This new twist of what constitutes evidence introduces a new and surreal level to UFO research whereby a case cannot be brought into question unless witnesses who *didn't* see anything come forward! *www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/updates/latest/*

Readers of a sceptical bent may also like to consider that, without exception, all the 'classic' UFO photographs date from the 50s and 60s when investigative techniques were sloppy and hoaxes easy to implement. As standards of investigation and research have improved, 'good' photographs are almost non-existent.

Makes you think, doesn't it?

WASHINGTON DC UFO SCARE

A UFO on a radar screen led the US secret service to evacuate staff from the White House in Washington DC on 20 November. The scare is the latest in a series of alerts caused by mysterious blips on radar since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

During this latest emergency, US Air Defense Command scrambled two F-16 fighters when a blip, thought to be a plane, entered restricted air space around the White House, but the pilots found nothing. President Bush was away on a state visit to Britain at the time, but one report claimed Vice President Dick Cheney was whisked away in a motorcade at the height of the alert.

Afterwards, Federal Aviation spokesman William Shumann said the emergency was sparked off by "a false radar target", possibly caused by atmospheric disturbances or even a flock of birds. He said: "It's one of those electronic gremlins that pop up, but there was no aircraft there." Radar operators are trained to quickly identify this type of anomaly, but when international tensions are high, unusual blips can suddenly take on a sinister significance.

NORAD command stated that it could not say what caused the false alarm, but fighters were scrambled early as a precaution. The agency said it had responded to almost 1,600 false alarms across the country since 9/11. The recent panics bring back memories of the "UFO invasion of Washington" at the height of the Cold War when the Soviet Union, rather than Al Qaeda, was the perceived threat. For several nights in July 1952, radar detected UFOs moving at tremendous speeds in the vicinity of the capitol and some of the pilots scrambled in pursuit claimed to have had sightings. The US Air Force later held a press conference where the blips were "explained" as temperature inversions. But as Charles Fort said: "There has never been an explanation that did not itself have to be explained."
http://edition.cnn.com; http://news/bbc/co.uk

ALL IN THE MIND?

The problem of whether alien abductions are physical or psychological events may soon be resolved. Sceptics have claimed that abduction experiences, although sincerely believed, are the product of 'false' memories and the lack of physical evidence has strengthened this view. Now, a study has revealed characteristic activity in the brain which is said to accurately predict whether a memory is accurate or false. A Harvard University team have recently discovered that 'true' memories cause strong activity in the ventral temporal cortex, whether or not the experiencer is conscious of the initial stimulus. It could be good news for abductees and their proponents. *www. newscientist. com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99994363*

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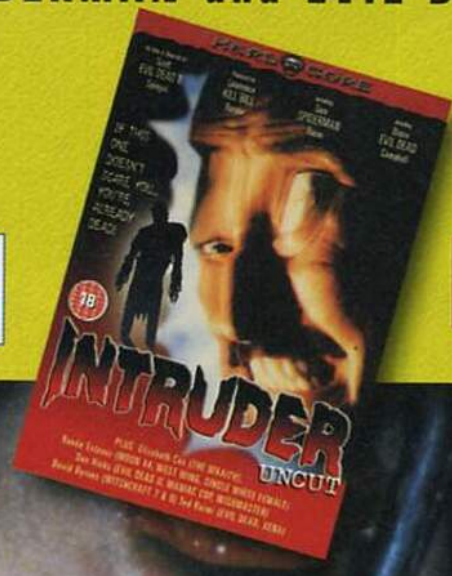

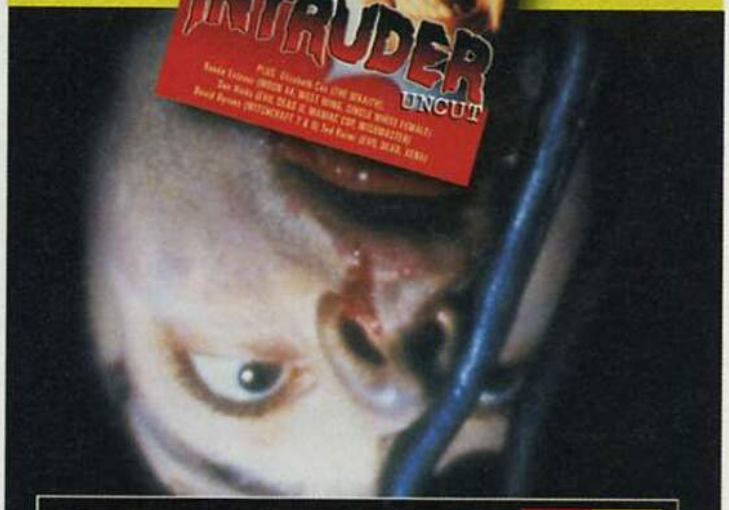

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archæology

NEIL MORTIMER locates the earliest known graveyard in Britain, underwater tools off Tyneside and carvings seen at Stonehenge.

BRITAIN'S OLDEST CEMETERY

RAPIDSELECT.COM

Radiocarbon dating of samples taken from 800 human bones excavated in a cave in Somerset during the early years of the 20th century has shown that the site is the earliest scientifically dated cemetery in Britain. The location of the site, at Aveline's Hole in the Mendip Hills, was first discovered in the 18th century when between 70 and 100 skeletons were found lying on the floor side by side. Fragments of bone and teeth from approximately 21 individuals have been radiocarbon dated to between about 10,200 and 10,400 years old, from a time shortly after the end of the last Ice Age. Deposited over a couple of centuries, the bones are the largest assemblage of Mesolithic remains ever found in Britain, making Aveline's Hole one of the most important European burial sites from this era. *Current Archaeology 188, Oct 2003.*

RAPIDSELECT.COM

AMONG THE DEAD: Dr Rick Schulting and Mick Wysocki show some of the remains.

SETTLEMENTS UNDER THE NORTH SEA

Archæologists from Newcastle University have discovered evidence of prehistoric occupation of land now lying under the North Sea. The researchers were undertaking a training exercise a few hundred metres off the coast near the mouth of the River Tyne when they discovered two settlement sites. Flint tools and arrowheads were found on the seabed, and the two sites have been dated to 8,000BC and between 3,000 and 8,500BC respectively. While the discovery is not the first submerged prehistoric settlement site to have been located off the British coast [see **FT161:18**], it is the first time such an example has been found in the North Sea.

ALL THREE PIX: COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

"I noticed lots of pieces of flint beneath me, on the seabed. To the average person they would seem like ordinary stones, but to a specialist they were something very exciting indeed," said Penny Spikins, leader of the research team. "Archæologists thought that the sites left by people who lived five to 10 thousand years ago had simply been lost to the sea, but our finds change our understanding of the earliest occupation of the British Isles". Optimistic archæo-forteans may yet see the discovery of the remains of a Stingray-style underwater civilisation lying beneath British coastal waters. *Times, Independent, 12 Sept 2003.*

CARVINGS FOR ALL

A team of computer experts and archæologists working at Stonehenge have used hi-tech laser scanner equipment to identify two badly eroded prehistoric carvings invisible to the naked eye. The carvings both show Bronze Age axe heads, the first about 6in (15cm) square, and the second about 4in (10cm) and are thought to have been made around 1,800BC, five or so centuries after the stone on which they are carved was erected. The best known carvings at Stonehenge, a dagger and 14 axes, were first recognised in 1953. The current team scanned only part of three megaliths and believe that a full scan of all the surviving 83 stones at Stonehenge would reveal more ancient carvings. Mike Pitts, editor of *British Archaeology* and a recognised Stonehenge expert, said: "It is extraordinary that these carvings, the most significant art gallery from ancient Britain, have still not been properly studied 50 years after their first discovery. The laser scanning process makes recording and studying possible, and can be used to reveal the nearly invisible carvings for all." *British Archaeology 73, Nov 2003. www.stonehengelaserscan.org*

BOTH PIX: WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY / ARCHAEOPTICS

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Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

67. MARAUDING MAGPIES

HUNT EMERSON

The myth

The dramatic decline in British songbird populations over the last 30 years is due to a simultaneous increase in magpies and sparrowhawks.

The "truth"

For years, this theory was thought to be so self-evidently true as to be unworthy of investigation, until a team from the BTO and the RSPB decided to test it – and it promptly fell apart. It's true that magpies and sparrowhawks have spread eastwards in Britain since 1970, and that they kill songbirds. It's even true that most songbirds studied have declined following the arrival of the two predators in their territories. However, subsequent investigation proved that songbird decline correlated even better with the arrival of collared doves, which are not predators. Further, by comparing songbird decline in areas which predators did and didn't move into, the study established that there was no correlation at all between the spread of magpies and sparrowhawks and the drop in songbird numbers. The probable cause of the decline is the growth of intensive agriculture.

Sources 'Caught in the act?' by Ken Thompson (*Organic Gardening*, Aug 2003), citing *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* B, 265, 2057-2062.

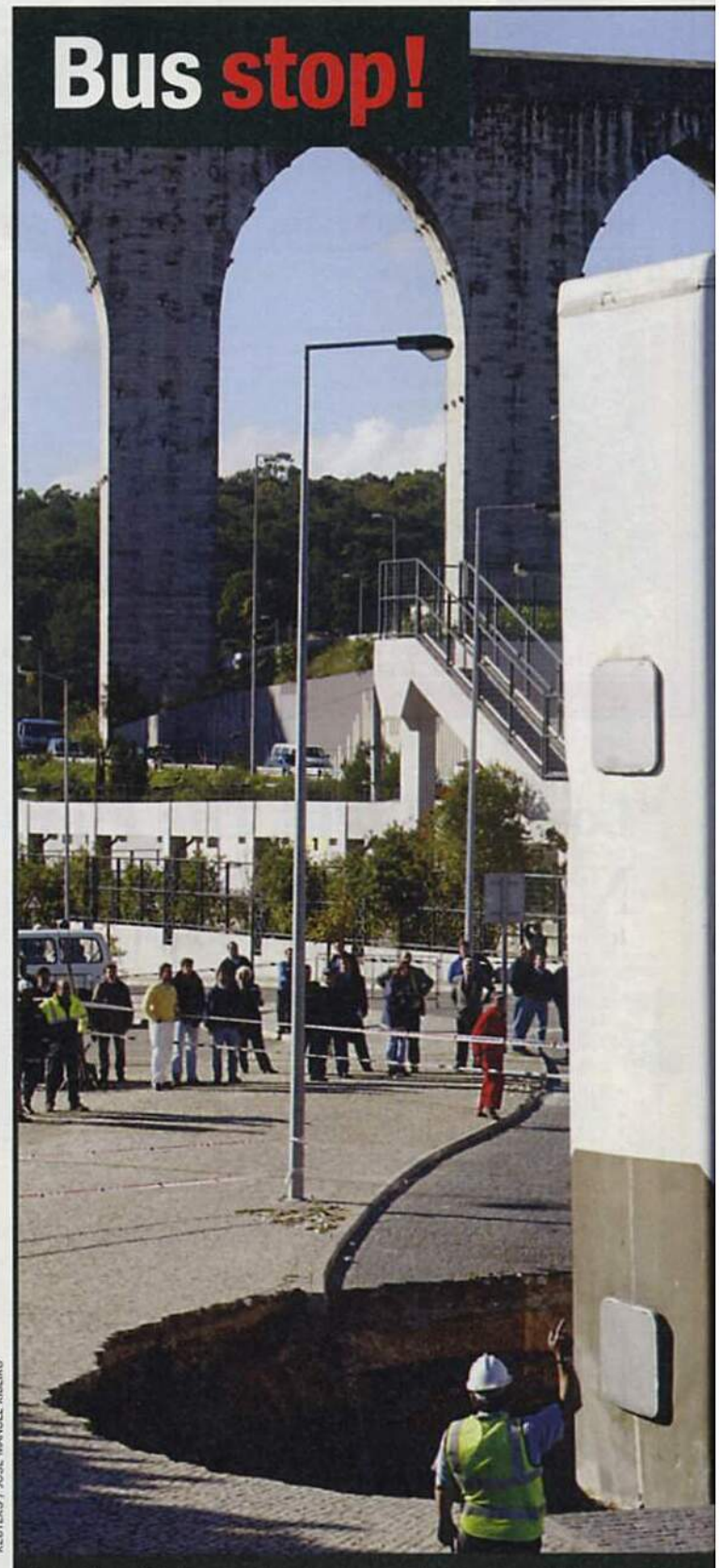
Disclaimer The loss of garden tweeties is an emotive matter, so if these findings rattle your cage, sing your song of dissent to the *FT* letters page.

Update

In **FT152**, I asked whether any celebrity (usually Chaplin, Presley or Astaire) had ever really entered a contest to impersonate themselves. Following a claim in *The Independent* (5 Nov 2003) that third place in a competition to impersonate broadcaster Alistair Cooke, on the BBC Radio 4 show *Broadcasting House*, was taken by Cooke himself, I asked the programme makers for details. Their reply: "It is true. But don't believe it." Hmm; the search continues.

HUNT EMERSON

Bus stop!



REUTERS / JOSE MANUEL RIBEIRO

The driver of this bus saw the street in front of him suddenly disappear as he pulled into a terminal in Lisbon, Portugal, on 25 November. The 20ft (6m) hole is believed to have been caused by a collapsing drain after torrential rain. Luckily, the bus had no passengers at the time and the driver managed to clamber free, suffering only minor injuries. ***Sun, D.Star, D.Record, 26 Nov 2003.***

Strange deaths

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THE MORTAL COIL

A FACTORY OWNER WITH MONEY TROUBLES climbed on the roof of his building in central Thailand to raise a flag believed to ward off bad luck – then slipped and fell to his death. Boonchai Lotharakphong, 43, whose factory made sportswear for Nike, died when he slipped off the roof in Lopburi province, 70 miles (113km) north of Bangkok. He had been sold the flag by a Chinese fortune teller. ***[AP] 15 Nov 2003.***

MAVRIL JONES CHOKED TO DEATH ON CARBON MONOXIDE fumes from her coal fire in February 2003 after a jackdaw built a 3ft- (90cm-) deep nest in her chimney. The 85-year-old widow, from Pontlliw, Swansea, South Wales, had put wire over the chimney, but it had either blown away or been removed by the birds. She was found in her front room with her devoted Jack Russell dog, which survived, alongside her. *D.Express, Sun, 22 Nov 2003.*

FLATULENT PARROTS killed an animal lover who collapsed and died in Tegelen, Holland. The unnamed victim, whose double-glazed house reeked of expelled wind from dozens of pet birds, had called an ambulance, saying he felt ill – but died before paramedics arrived. The police blamed a combination of the birds' farts and ammonia from their droppings. ***Sun, 21 Nov 2003.***

TERRY COLON

ALASDAIR PORTER, 38, A COMPANY director, became the first kite surfer to be killed in Britain when a gust of wind swept him 50ft (15m) along Calshot beach, near Southampton, in August 2003 and hurled him head first into a sea wall at "incredible speed". *D.Telegraph, 17 Oct 2003.*

JIM JIVRAM, 48, OF SURBITON, SURREY, died of septicæmia in hospital seven years after being stung by a scorpion while on holiday in Spain. "He was in severe pain for a long time," said a work colleague. "He took three or four doses of antibiotics, but never finished the courses." ***Sun, 13 Aug 2003.***

A COLLEGE STUDENT SURVIVED A lightning strike while mountain climbing, but was killed in a second strike. Ryan Sayers, 20, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, and his German girlfriend Katrin Birmann, 24, were climbing a cliff on Steeple Peak, central Wyoming, on 16 June 2003 when lightning hit them 1,500ft (469m) from the summit. Removing their equipment, they decided to sit out the storm, but about an hour later they were hit by a second lightning strike, and Sayers fell about 300ft (90m) into a ravine. Birmann, who suffered minor burns, found her boyfriend dead when she rappelled down to him. A rescue team recovered the body the next day. An examination determined he died from the lightning strikes, not the fall. *[AP] 20 June 2003.*

ELEVEN PEOPLE DIED AND THOUSANDS were hospitalised with breathing difficulties after a swarm of grasshoppers invaded central Sudan. Health authorities in Wad Medani, 110 miles (177km) southeast of Khartoum, said an epidemic of lung eczema has afflicted 1,685 people since 22 October. Local resident Joseph Mogum said the grasshoppers gave off a strong smell. ***Los Angeles Times, 2 Nov 2003.***

THE BODY OF DEREK CARMICHAEL, 56, a quality control inspector from Bristol, was found face down in a field of horses in the village of Hallen near Bristol on 13 June 2003. He was wearing a shirt, jumper, moccasins and socks, but his jeans were lying nearby with his underpants in a pocket. He had superficial injuries to his face, but police found no evidence of foul play.

A post-mortem examination revealed he suffered from "extremely severe" coronary disease. A pathologist told the inquest on 16 October that the two horses could have caused the injuries to Carmichael's face: "It is possible that they had come across because he was lying still and had attempted to move him." A policeman said it was not known why he was not wearing trousers, but he must have taken them off himself and then put his shoes and socks back on, because if someone had pulled the trousers off, his shoes would have come off too. Verdict: death by natural causes. *[PA] Guardian, 17 Oct 2003.*

GARETH DUGGAN, 24, LAY DEAD FOR two days at the foot of his stairs while his family stepped over him because they thought it was "a wind-up", an inquest heard. He had fallen at his home in Neath, South Wales. ***News of the World, 19 Oct 2003.***

Doors of perception

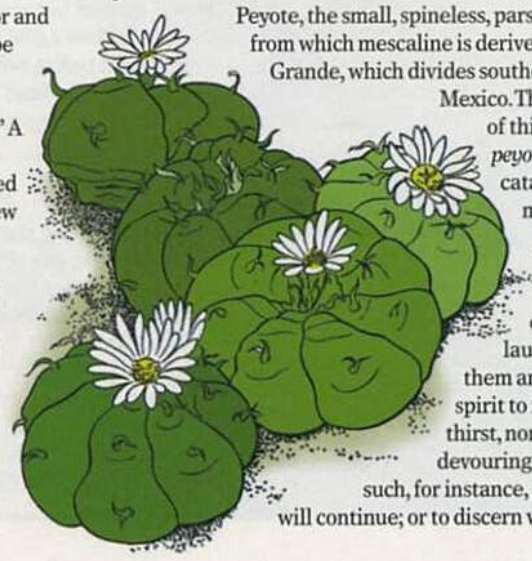
Aldous Huxley was already a legendary figure in the literary sphere when he was introduced to the milieu of mind-bending drugs. ANTONIO MELECHI takes a trip down memory lane to fling wide *The Doors Of Perception* and seek the pathway to *Heaven and Hell*.

In the evening of 5 May 1953, the tree-lined streets running off Sunset Boulevard "trembled on the brink of the supernatural" and the houses in the hills of nearby Hollywood "gleamed in the sunshine, like fragments of the New Jerusalem". For Aldous Huxley, this was a last, dazzling glimpse of a vanishing Eden. Eight hours earlier, he had swallowed four-tenths of a gramme of mescaline, courtesy of Dr Humphry Osmond, the psychiatrist now riding in the back seat, and immersed himself in the quivering "is-ness" of his everyday surroundings. The downtown drive to the 'World's Largest Drug Store' confirmed what Huxley had suspected: "transfiguration was proportional to distance. The nearer, the more divinely other." But now, as his car pulled up to North Kings Road, even the nearest of objects had recovered the dull patina of familiarity. Huxley, the mystic *manqué*, had come back through the door in the wall.

This was not what he had expected. The medical literature on mescaline described the restless "visions of many-coloured geometries", "animated architecture", "landscapes with heroic figures" which experimenters had seen with *closed eyes*. But Huxley, whose eyesight was extremely poor and capacity for vivid recall almost nil, was not to be transported into these visionary realms. "The great change," that occurred to him under mescaline, "was in the realm of objective fact." A vase of flowers appeared to glow and breathe. The books in his study seemed to be illuminated by a "living light". A bamboo chair offered "new direct insight into the very Nature of Things." And, most miraculously of all, the folds of his trousers hosted "the unfathomable mystery of pure being".

Earlier that morning, Osmond had watched nervously as he poured the silvery-white crystals into water. Fearing that he might be remembered as the "the man who drove Aldous Huxley mad", he decided to halve the dose, then changed his mind. After giving Huxley his mescaline at 11 o' clock, Osmond, who had recently begun to use the hallucinogen in his research on the biochemistry of schizophrenia, monitored Huxley's response to music, illustrations and various objects about him. Very soon, all his worries were allayed. Aside from one moment in the garden – when Huxley was briefly panicked "by a chair which looked like the Last Judgement" – he proved a perfect subject. "This is how one ought to see, how things really are," he kept repeating to the tape recorder that quietly whirred by his side.

A bamboo chair offered new, direct insight into the very nature of things

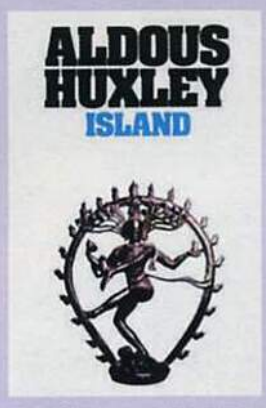


Peyote, the small, spineless, parsnip-shaped cactus (below) from which mescaline is derived, grows south of the Rio Grande, which divides southern Texas from northern Mexico. The remarkable properties of this 'divine cactus', deified as *peyotl* by the Aztecs, were first catalogued by the Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagun. "Those who eat or drink it," Sahagun wrote in 1560, "see visions either frightful or laughable... it stimulates them and gives them sufficient spirit to fight and have neither fear, thirst, nor hunger... It causes those devouring it to foresee and predict; such, for instance, as whether the weather will continue; or to discern who has stolen from them".

ED SPANKIE

The island of the irrational

In June 1961, after finishing his utopian novel *Island*, Huxley returned to London and embarked on a series of radio and television interviews. The most substantial of these took place over two afternoons with John Chandos, who prompted a frail and tired-looking Huxley to reflect on the genesis of his 'gift for co-ordinating facts', on the narrow-mindedness of orthodox Freudians, and the 'miserable symbols' that Christianity had evolved.

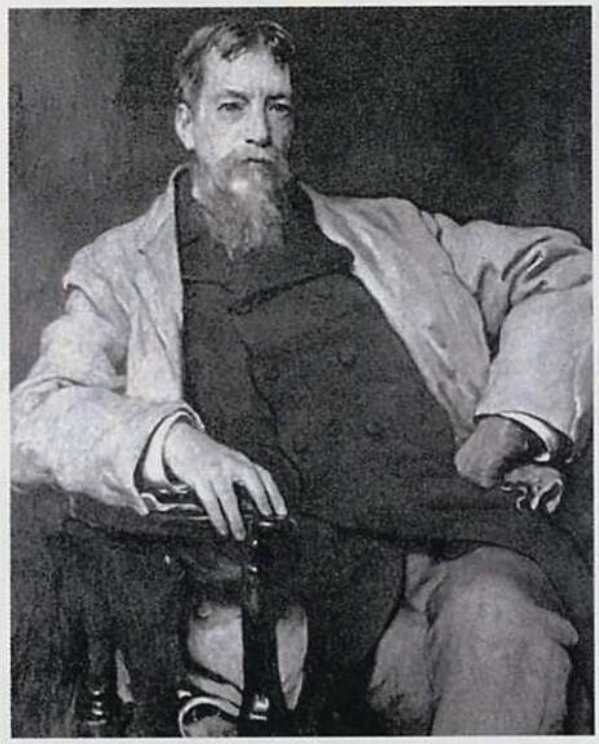


As always, conversation turned to the subject of mescaline and LSD, which Huxley had now taken four and three times respectively. Huxley again described these drugs as offering a kind of "gratuitous grace... neither necessary nor significant for salvation or enlightenment". Yet, at the same time, he appeared to associate the kinds of emotional or 'irrational' release they facilitated with a sensibility that was essentially Bacchic and carnivalesque. Recognising that Christianity had hastened the demise of dance, festival and other rituals capable of purging "intolerable tension", Huxley insisted that the loss of such "empirical devices" was partly responsible for the state of psychological inertia which characterised modern society. "How can we allow the irrational its proper scope within a general framework of rationality and benevolence?" This was the very conundrum that *Island* had attempted to resolve.

Mescaline set about ram-raiding the human unconscious

Condemned as an agent of sorcery and superstition by the Catholic Church, the use of peyote was never successfully outlawed, and most of the surviving tribes of Mexican Indians continued to consult and seek protection from the magical plant.

Western science began to take an interest in the peyote cactus in the 1880s – the period in which the young Freud gave up on cocaine, another 'magical substance' from the New World – when the Ghost Dance religion took hold on the Comanche and Kiowa reservations. After James Mooney, an agent of the American Bureau of Ethnology, observed and participated in the newly-flourishing messianic rites, samples of peyote were sent to chemists who dryly confirmed that "the production of visions is the most interesting of the physiological effects" of the drug. The race to unpack its chemical constituents was led by German chemists. In 1888, the Berlin toxicologist Louis Lewin reported having isolated an alkaloid, Anhalonin, from the samples of dried peyote. As research into this new visionary substance intensified, his compatriot Arthur Hefter succeeded in isolating four alkaloids. Through self-experimentation he attributed the most potent effects to the alkaloid which he dubbed Mezcalin, and which American commentators re-christened mescaline (popularised as mescalin). A wave of medical and literary self-experimentation greeted the discovery. As Freud dabbled with free association, a preamble to the full-blown talking cure, peyote and mescaline set about ram-raiding the unconscious.



BELOW: Weir Mitchell predicted a "perilous reign of the mescal habit" if the drug were to become widely available.

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This little-known chapter in the history of psychopharmacology had two distinct phases. First, came the self-experiments of eminent physicians such as Weir Mitchell, whose breathless account of closed-eye visions (replete with silver stars, gothic architecture, precious stones and coloured fruit) culminated in predicting a "perilous reign of the mescal habit when this agent becomes available." Inspired by Mitchell, the English psychologist and critic Havelock Ellis undertook the first of a number of experiments on Good Friday, 1897. The "orgy of vision" which unfolded before him was "not only an unforgettable delight, but an educational influence of no mean value." Following the laboratory synthesis of mescaline in 1919, research accelerated and revealed a common core of visual phenomena – filigree, cobwebs, cogwheels, flowers, snowflakes – which all appeared to be generated by the eye's sub-cortical system. To render these 'indescribable' visions, European researchers turned increasingly to professional artists. At London's Maudsley hospital, for example, Julian Trevelyan was one of a number of painters who tried to capture the drug's 'mechanical ballet'. Like Ellis before him, Trevelyan also experienced something more. As doctors assailed him with 'ridiculous questions', Trevelyan found himself gripped by a secret rapture – he had "fallen in love with a sausage roll and a piece of crumpled newspaper from a pig-bucket".

Mescaline had by now embarked on its second, more diabolical career as an agent for producing a 'model psychosis'. (The chemical search for drugs capable of mimicking madness harked back to the 1840s, when the French alienist Jacques Joseph Moreau took hashish in order to examine the nature of delirium from within.) Research conducted by Kurt Beringer at Heidelberg Psychiatric Clinic in the late 1920s underlined mescaline's capacity to similarly stir delusions and hallucinations, paranoia and depersonalisation, especially when administered in higher dosage. One Italian psychiatrist was able to report these effects at first hand. During a profoundly paranoiac episode in his Milan apartment, GE Morselli watched helplessly as a Titian portrait became eerily animate. For the next two months, Morselli was haunted by this belligerent squatter.

It was while writing *Brave New World* (1932) that Huxley first became aware of mescaline. By this time, the drug's popularity among European intellectuals was beginning to catch the attention of the medical press. "The use of this alkaloid," warned the *British Journal of Addiction* in 1931 "has indeed become almost a cult by reason of its peculiar physiological effects". The spectre of so-called 'mescal addiction' was, however, far-fetched. Twenty years on, when Osmond and his colleagues

reminded the medical world that mescaline produced "every single major symptom of acute schizophrenia," the drug was almost forgotten. As a long-time critic of "asinine psychiatry", Huxley was intrigued to learn that mescaline was being used experimentally by Osmond and his co-workers at Saskatchewan Hospital. The short letter he sent to Osmond in April 1953, after reading about his attempts to unlock the causes and nature of schizophrenia, endorsed the approach but elided his real interests. Remembering what he had read about mescaline in Louis Lewin's *Phantastica*, Huxley realised that the drug might also be used as a conduit to the other worlds described by William Law, Jacob Boehme and the perennial philosophers.

When the opportunity to experiment finally presented itself, Huxley was not disappointed. Witnessing "what Adam had seen on the morning of his creation – the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence," he understood how words and concepts came to impede the ability to look at the world directly. The chemical door in the wall had, apparently, allowed him to flee the prison house of language, the tyranny of conceptual thinking.

The Doors of Perception (1954) took Huxley two months to complete. A first draft was passed on to his wife, Maria, who had been present throughout the experiment. It was at her suggestion that Aldous's blue jeans (the folds of which had suggested "a labyrinth of endless complexity") were swapped for a more respectable pair of grey flannels. To this amendment, Huxley added one of his own: he replaced the solution of mescaline sulphate with a more palatable 'pill'. But these were trifling details. When it came to the more pressing question of the value of the visionary experience, drug-induced or otherwise, Huxley's conclusion was emphatic:

All I am suggesting is that the mescalin experience is what the Catholic theologians call a 'gratuitous grace,' not necessary to salvation but potentially helpful and to be accepted thankfully, if made available. To be shaken out of the ruts of ordinary perception, to be shown for a few timeless hours the outer and inner world... directly and unconditionally, by Mind at Large – this is an experience of inestimable value to everyone and especially the intellectual.

Published in February 1954, the 'little book' was an immediate bestseller. Hundreds of readers offered parallel experiences of childbirth, sleep deprivation, fasting and meditation. A number of reviewers, including Huxley's friend Raymond Mortimer, penned their own broadsheet accounts of mescaline visions. Not surprisingly, few of Huxley's critics picked up on the full range of ideas and observations that he had shoehorned into 20,000 words. The conviction that differences in human physique could explain variations in temperament was passed over. His notion of the mind as a "cerebral reducing valve" was largely ignored, as were his asides on the nature of the schizophrenic experience and the decline of visionary arts. Debate was instead centred on the spiritual register in which Huxley had enshrined his own experience of mescaline – from Meister Eckhart's *'Istigkeit'*, to the 'Being' of Platonic philosophy and the 'Void' in Zen Buddhism – and the questionable value of drugs as aids to religious experience.

Most of Huxley's detractors echoed what the novelist Thomas Mann, a one-time champion of Huxley, wrote about *The Doors of Perception* in a letter to Ida Herz – "an irresponsible book, which can only contribute to the stupefaction of the world and to its inability to meet the deadly questions of the time with intelligence." RC Zaehner, an Oxford Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics, went one step further, volunteering to take mescaline in order to undermine Huxley's claims. Zaehner's prejudices were confirmed: "self-transcendence of a sort did take place, but transcendence into a world of farcical meaninglessness. All things were one in the sense that they were all, at the height of my manic state, equally funny."

In the meantime, Huxley resumed his investigations. In 1955, he took mescaline twice. On the first occasion he was in the company of his old friend Gerald Heard, a well-known pacifist, novelist and dilettante in psychical research, and Al Hubbard, the eccentric

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ABOVE: Huxley photographed in the early 1950s, shortly before he embarked on his first mescalin experience.

In his manic state, all things were equally funny

The antipodes of the mind

After the publication of the *Doors of Perception*, Huxley (below) took on the role of a multi-disciplinary 'fox', "crawling about in the woodwork between the pigeonholes [of academia]". The lecture circuit did little to revive his flagging literary reputation, but it enabled his transformation into a globe-trotting intellectual. "In Brazil it was as though the Leaning Tower of Pisa had just come to town... and even in Italy I found myself talking to full houses in large theatres".

The scientific 'hedgehogs', however, were not always convinced of Huxley's talent for bridge-building. Ronald Sandison, the British pioneer of LSD therapy, met Huxley at a Round Table meeting in Atlantic City in May 1955. Huxley, the only lay person present, spoke of his mescaline-fuelled travels across the Old World and into the 'Antipodes of the Mind'. When Sandison eventually had the opportunity to talk to Huxley, it proved "a disappointing encounter... He adopted an air that he lived on a different plane from clinicians. He dismissed my questions about Jung and the archetypes, saying that he 'had gone beyond Jung'... there seemed no meeting point between us."

Most of Huxley's critics would, nevertheless, have stopped some way short of the opinion that Jean Paulhan, an editor at the French publishing house Gallimard, expressed after reading the *Doors of Perception*. For Paulhan, Huxley's essay was 'tainted' by two serious shortcomings: "the fact: a) he's not very intelligent. b) that he is, in his natural state, almost blind".

LEFT: Huxley shown addressing the University of California conference on "A Pharmacological Approach to the Study of the Mind" on 26 January 1959.

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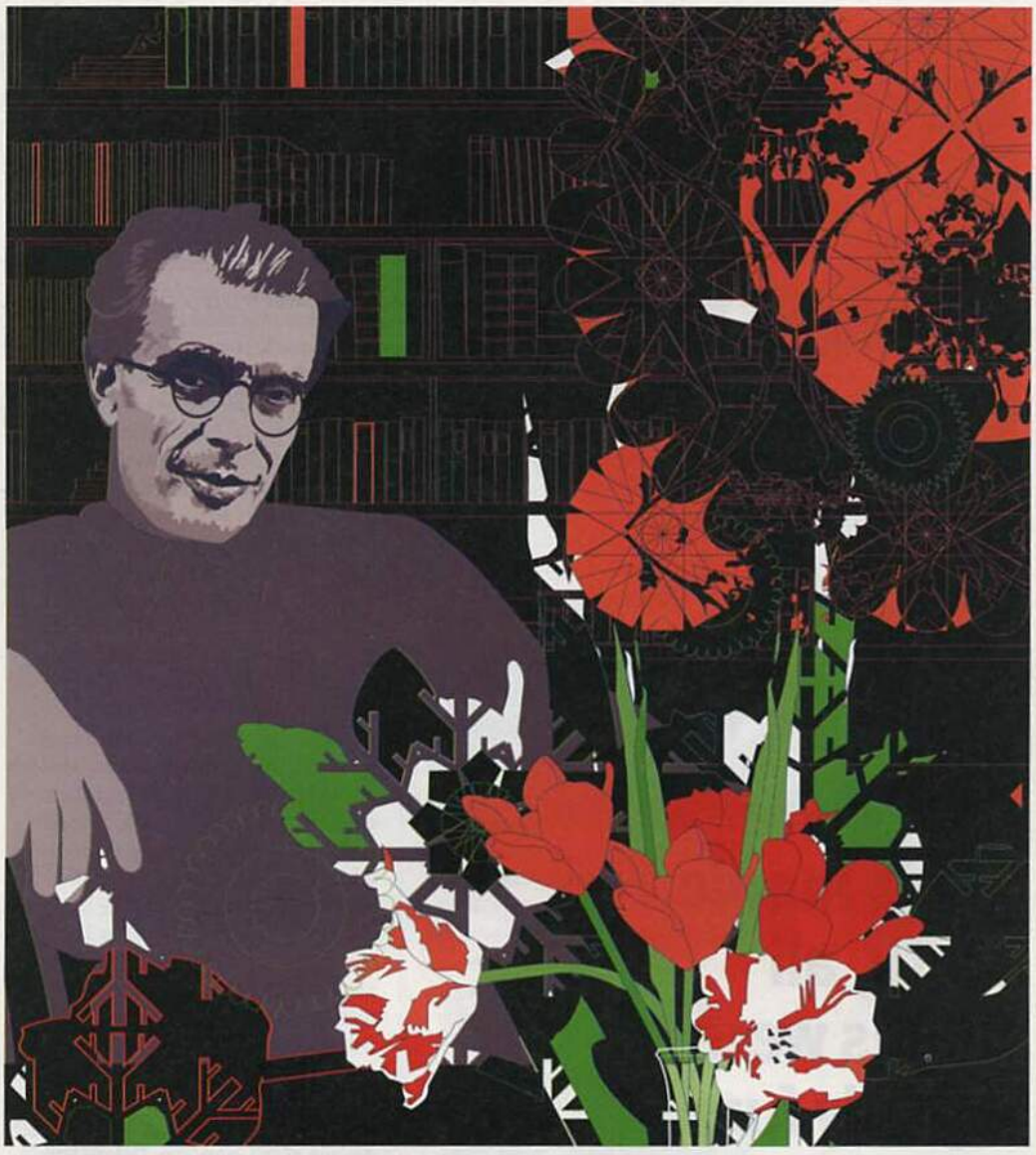

KID SPANNARD

president of a Vancouver uranium corporation, who had been independently experimenting with mescaline and LSD as bridges to the spirit world. This group session introduced Huxley to the social aspect of the mescaline experience – he had previously felt cut off from Maria and Osmond, avoiding eye contact throughout – and provided him with a "transcendental experience within this world and with human references".

While he attempted to convince Osmond that all future research should provide subjects with undirected time, so that they could make their own way towards the "Clear Light", he also explored the artistic depiction of visionary worlds in his essay *Heaven and Hell* (1956). Huxley's talent for the 'curious fact' and the 'necessary digression' was nowhere better deployed: the role of the collector in early science; the mystical writings of Traherne and Surin; the importance of precious stones in visionary art; the early development of landscape painting in China; the use of carbon dioxide and stroboscopic lamps as aids to visionary experience; the rise and fall of pyrotechny. The spell of Huxley's meandering reflections was broken only on close inspection. The central trope of *Heaven and Hell* – that the borderlands of psychology are to modern day science

Was Huxley the same man when he came back?

what the flora and fauna of the New World were to the 19th-century naturalists – was particularly convoluted. This florid analogy stressed "the essential otherness of the mind's far continents", yet it altogether neglected the mysteries of so-called 'everyday consciousness'.

Over the next seven or so years, Huxley continued to explore the potential use of psychedelics, adding LSD and psilocybin to his personal repertoire. Whether writing for *Esquire*, lecturing to the New York Academy of Science, or being interviewed for the BBC, he continued to press the therapeutic and educational benefits that might come of "a course of chemically triggered conversion experience or ecstasies". As an advocate of the psychedelic experience, he retained all the rhetorical tricks he had deployed in his early satires. Addressing critics like Zaehner, who scorned his brand of 'instant mysticism', he argued that to revert to more primitive and prolonged methods was "as senseless as it would be for an aspiring cook to behave like Charles Lamb's Chinaman, who burned down the house in order to roast a pig". But there were limitations to his approach. Compared to the Belgian-born poet and painter Henri Michaux, who had begun a remarkable series of prose studies on mescaline and other hallucinogens, Huxley's scatterbrained offerings were overloaded with reflection and interpretation. Whereas Michaux provided a poetic and forensically intimate account of his 'co-habitation' with mescaline and other drugs, Huxley – who never wrote while under the influence – delivered a metaphysical framework and programme. His preoccupations remained essentially utilitarian.

Was the Huxley who came back through the door opened by mescaline a different man? Had his outlook changed in any significant sense? Clearly, his passionate engagement with the question of chemical transcendence required no conversion or leap of faith. Before discovering mescaline he had explored most of the borderlands of psychology and was still searching for a *via regis* to mystical illumination. Yet his sense of intellectual office was clearly affected by his experiences. Having played the role of literary curator and custodian to a range of scientific oddities, Huxley emerged as a full-blown gentleman activist, prepared to address and ask questions of pharmacology, biochemistry, physiology, neurology, psychology and psychiatry. For all his wayward enthusiasm, Huxley was, and remains, a useful antidote to the confederacy of peer-reviewed science. FT

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED READING

Sybille Bedford, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography, Vol. 2: 1939-1963* (Chatto and Windus, 1974).

Michael Horowitz and Cynthia Palmer (Eds.) *Aldous Huxley: Moksha, Writings on Psychedelics and Visionary Experience 1931-1963* (Ramingo, 1994).

Aldous Huxley, *Doors of Perception/Heaven and Hell* (Ramingo, 1994).

Aldous Huxley, *Island* (Perennial, 2002).

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Aldous Huxley's 1961 interview with John Chandos is available as a remastered CD, *Speaking Personally* (Artifact Music, 2002)

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ANTONIO MELECHI is a visiting fellow at the University of York. He is the editor of Psychedelia Britannia(1997) and Mindscapes (2001). His latest book, Fugitive Minds: On Madness, Sleep and other Twilight Afflictions, is published by Heinemann.

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Gastric fantastic

Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* has long been celebrated as a classic of drug literature – but what if an upset tummy, and not opium use, was the real cause of the writer's disturbing visions? SIMON WILSON takes us back to an era in which the stomach threatened to unseat man's very soul.

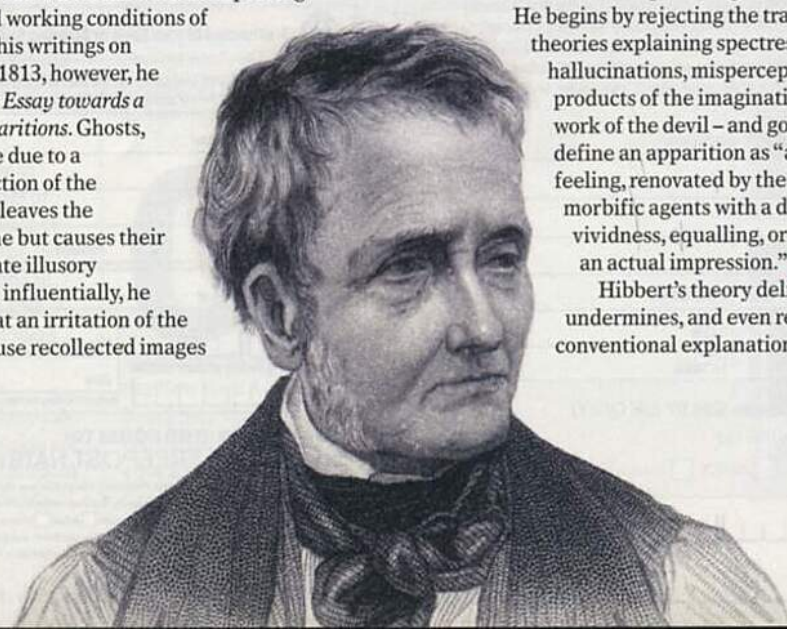
We've all experienced the torment of an upset stomach and the horror of indigestion. But most people are probably not aware of just what a dastardly threat dyspepsia poses. If certain 19th century physicians are to be believed, tummy-ache has the power to undermine religions. Not only can it place one at the mercy of ghosts and apparitions, it can also cause the body to overwhelm the soul itself, putting one's very immortality at risk. This may sound bizarre, but such claims were made by a number of people prominent in their respective fields and widely respected in intellectual circles. One man in particular sent some astounding messages from the abyss of indigestion: that arch opium-eater and valetudinarian, Thomas De Quincey (below).

The story really begins with Dr John Ferriar (1761-1815), a leading Manchester physician probably best known for his work in improving the living and working conditions of the poor and his writings on literature. In 1813, however, he published *An Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions*. Ghosts, he argues, are due to a "partial affection of the brain" which leaves the witnesses sane but causes their senses to create illusory objects. Most influentially, he maintains that an irritation of the brain may cause recollected images to be conjured up so that they are 'seen' again.[1]

Recollected images are conjured up and 'seen' again

It was this argument that was taken up by Dr Samuel Hibbert in a *bravura* variation on the theme. Hibbert (1782-1848) is today an even more obscure figure than Ferriar, known, if at all, for his antiquarian writings. But in *Sketches of the Philosophy of Apparitions* (1824; 2nd ed. 1825) he produced a lengthy *tour-de-force* account of the revivification of past images and feelings. He begins by rejecting the traditional theories explaining spectres – such as hallucinations, misperceptions, products of the imagination or the work of the devil – and goes on to define an apparition as "a past feeling, renovated by the aid of morbific agents with a degree of vividness, equalling, or exceeding, an actual impression."[2]

Hibbert's theory deliberately undermines, and even reverses, the conventional explanations offered



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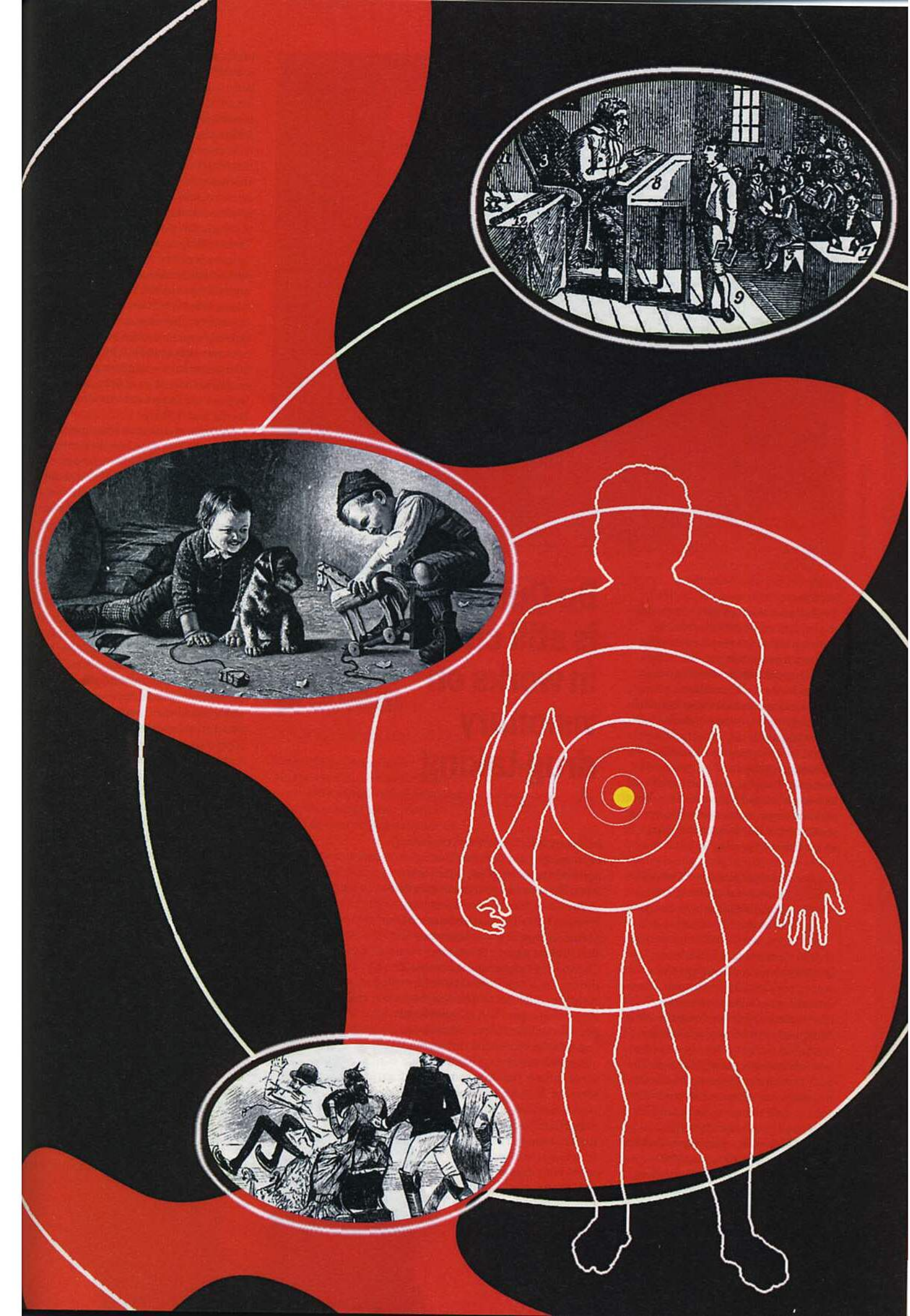
MAIN IMAGE: ETIENNE GILFILLAN



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LEFT: John Ferriar, author of *An Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions.*

BELOW: William Wordsworth, leading poet who was both interested in Ferriar's work and was one of De Quincey's great literary idols.

for ghosts. Far from being the manifestations of spirits of the dead, they have, he claims, a purely material origin: they are produced when our bodies override our minds, even while we remain perfectly sane. This occurs, according to Hibbert, when "variously excited states of the circulating system, or... nervous influence" cause "morbid affections" in the organs of the body. [3] So the body's organs, including the organs of sense, somehow actually reproduce feelings and images derived from past thoughts and emotions. When we witness an apparition, we actually *see* it: the organic structure of the eye is so stimulated that it reproduces an image from the past.

De Quincey is still cited in works on visionary drug-taking

The implications of Hibbert's ideas are disturbing. The body, impelled by the excited bloodstream or nerves, so overcomes voluntary mental control that it blocks out, to a greater or lesser extent, objective reality, replacing it with the past. The smooth flow of consciousness is interrupted, and we are forced to watch as our body and our past experiences (including things we have been told or even what we have read) take over. The body asserts its rights over the mind to manufacture reality and identity: all you can do (if it is possible to talk of a 'you' at all in this case) is watch.

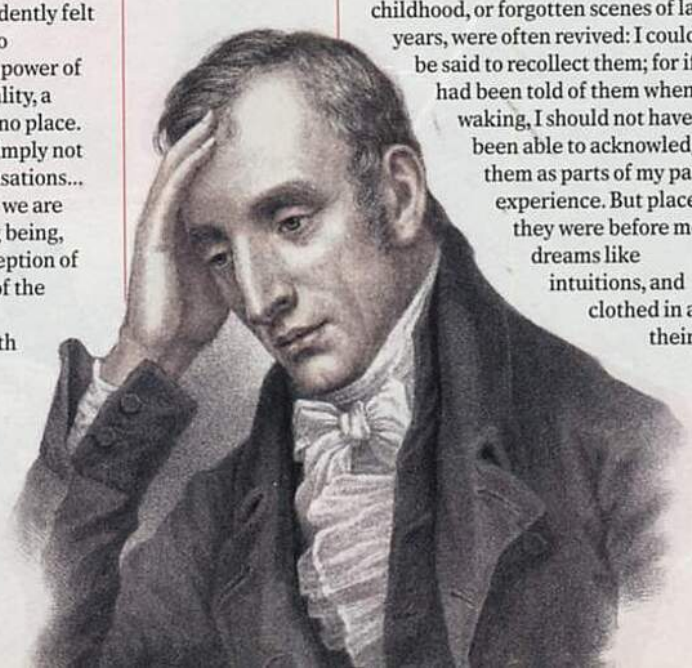
Hibbert's book aroused considerable interest. A sign of its impact is that it was even thought necessary to issue a book-length rebuttal to Hibbert's work of triumphant materialism, the significantly (and lengthily) titled *Past Feelings Renovated; or, Ideas Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Hibbert's* Philosophy of Apparitions. *Written with the View of Counteracting any Sentiments Approaching Materialism, Which that Work, However Unintentional on the Part of the Author, May Have a Tendency to Produce* (1828). The anonymous author of *Past Feelings Renovated* evidently felt that Hibbert posed a threat to Christianity by asserting the power of the body to create its own reality, a reality in which the soul had no place. He (or she) argues that it is simply not possible for "our ideas or sensations... to produce a conception that we are other than ourselves; a living being, susceptible of the clear perception of identity." Instead, a version of the traditional view of ghosts is maintained: our nature is both material and spiritual, and the mind is so independent of the body as to allow us at times to perceive "spiritual existences". [4]

Both Ferriar's and Hibbert's works were read and discussed avidly, especially in literary and scientific circles. William Wordsworth had a copy of Ferriar's *Essay* in his library at Rydal Mount in the Lake District, and Charles Lamb also read it. [5] Judging by the number of articles about it in contemporary journals (not to mention *Past Feelings Renovated*), Hibbert's contribution in particular caused quite a stir. [6] But the writer whose work most closely relates to that of the good doctors must surely be Thomas De Quincey (1785 - 1859). De Quincey is, of course, notorious as an opium addict, and is still cited today in works on the visionary aspects of drug-taking. What is not normally appreciated, however, is that De Quincey's opium use did not actually cause his visions. Rather, he began to take opium in an attempt to palliate exactly the sort of revivification of past feelings and images described by Ferriar and Hibbert.

De Quincey may even have known Ferriar when he was a boy. Ferriar was a leading member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, part of the milieu in which the future Opium-Eater spent his early childhood. Even if he did not know Ferriar personally, De Quincey certainly read widely in books which refer extensively to the doctor's theories. [7]

In the *Confessions* De Quincey describes how, in 1813, he began to be troubled by the return of past sensations and images, and also by past stomach upsets. His drug intake had been relatively inconsiderable until then, when "a most painful affection of the stomach, which I had first experienced about ten years before, attacked me in great strength." [*Confessions*, p6] He is referring to his experiences of 1802-1803 when he was living rough in London after absconding from Manchester Grammar School. The adolescent ailment doesn't come alone, being "accompanied by a revival of all the old dreams" [C, p52]. The returning images and feelings consist of experiences of which he has no conscious recollection. It is worth quoting him at length:

> "The minutest incidents of childhood, or forgotten scenes of later years, were often revived: I could not be said to recollect them; for if I had been told of them when waking, I should not have been able to acknowledge them as parts of my past experience. But placed as they were before me, in dreams like intuitions, and clothed in all their



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evanescent circumstances and accompanying feelings, I *recognised* them instantaneously." [*C*, p68]

What he calls 'dreams' are not by any means solely sleeping experiences. For De Quincey, the word refers to what we would call visions or hallucinations – or, indeed, apparitions. They clearly consist of the return of past images and feelings, and come to form "visions as ugly... phantoms as ghastly, as ever haunted the couch of Orestes" [*Collected Works* v3: p376]. It will be remembered that Orestes was pursued by avenging furies tormenting him because of a past act (the murder of his mother). De Quincey may never have murdered anyone, but his past experiences harry him nevertheless, forcing him into "dread contest with phantoms". [*CW* v3: p377]

He increases his opium intake to counteract his stomach problems and so lay to rest the apparitions, *not* to bring them on. His plan, of course, doesn't work. As his stomach becomes weaker and weaker and its condition worsens, the visions and revenants become more intense. In the *Confessions* he records how by 1817 not only past experiences but also his past readings in history began to furnish the material for the phantoms he was forced to witness: "at night, when I lay in bed, vast processions passed along in mournful pomp." [*C*, p67]

In fact, the opium is instrumental in the further degeneration of his stomach. In an appendix he added to the *Confessions* on their first publication in book form in 1822, De Quincey noted that "the unnatural state of [his] stomach" was "vitiated by so long a use of opium". [*CW* v3: p469] By 1838 he was complaining of "the ravages in the great central organ, the stomach... wrought by opium." [*CW* v3: p73]

Hibbert explains why De Quincey should have so firmly associated his apparitions with his stomach problems. For certain constitutions, he writes, the major "morbid affection" connected with the disorders that cause visions is disorder of the digestive organs. [8]

Even when opium seems to directly cause De Quincey's visions, it is operating through his stomach, the state of which is the decisive factor in the renovation of his past feelings and images. Only a sound stomach would free him from the ghosts of the past.

At least one of De Quincey's contemporaries made the connection between him and Hibbert (although he made the common mistake of finding the sole cause of the apparitions in De Quincey's opium habit and not in the state of his stomach). In 1832 John Addington Symonds (1807-1871), a physician and father of the more famous poet and scholar of the same name, wrote an article *On Apparitions*, essentially following Hibbert on the physical causes of the phenomenon.

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ABOVE: Robert Whytt, professor of the theory of medicine at Edinburgh University 1747-1766, who examined the concept of 'sympathy' which attempted to explain the balance between all the body's organs and the 'spirit'.

An upset stomach presented a serious religious problem

Citing "Mr. de Quincy's [sic] Confessions of an Opium Eater [sic]," he noted the danger to the individual if memories or imagination should become as vivid as his perception of reality. [9]

For Hibbert, although disturbed stomachs often accompany the disorders causing apparitions, they are only a side effect of those disorders. For De Quincey, however, his shot digestion was not merely secondary to nervous or circulatory disorder: it was the primary cause of the involuntary recollections. This was possible, he believed, because: "There is very slight ground for holding the brain to be the organ of thinking, or the heart of moral sensibilities, more than the stomach, or the bowels, or the intestines generally." [*CW* v8: pp196-197] Or, as he had written in 1824, "the brain and the stomach-apparatus through their reciprocal action and reaction jointly make up the compound organ of thought." [*CW* v10: p446] [10]

His comments go far beyond the conventional belief in 'gut feelings'. For De Quincey, digestion and the operation of our thoughts are one. The action of the stomach, at least in part, produces our thoughts and even our moral feelings.

Bizarre as it may seem now, his view of the importance of the stomach was not particularly anomalous at the time. The problem of indigestion was a national obsession, and countless books were written on the subject. [11] One physician whose writings made a particular impact on De Quincey was Dr Alexander Philip Wilson Philip (1770-1851), whose *A Treatise on Indigestion* (1821) he mentioned at least three times in print [*CW* v8: pp354-355; v14: pp270-271]. [12] Stressing the centrality of the stomach, Wilson Philip described the disastrous effects of indigestion, which radiates out from the stomach, influencing every single part of the body. Indigestion, he writes, is "the most varied of all diseases". It "becomes so complicated, and often, at length, so undermines every power of the system, that it is difficult to give a view of its symptoms, which shall be at once sufficiently full and distinct. It is an affection of the central part of a most complicated structure, capable of influencing even its remotest parts, and each, through many channels, and in various ways." [13]

Digestive disorders, then, can manifest themselves as any conceivable disease. No wonder the stomach was more crucial than the brain.

The problem, however, went even further than this. An upset stomach in the early 19th century presented a serious religious problem, representing the final victory of the material over the spiritual. It was able not only to disorder the whole body and mind of the sufferer, it could also disease the very soul itself.

The theory of 'sympathy' explained how this could be so. Sympathy was the name given by medicine at the time to the organic co-operation, interaction and equilibrium of all the organs of the human body, including the brain. Sympathy was believed to ensure that all the organs worked together to create a unified whole. In his work of popular science *Curiosities of Medical Experience* (1837), for instance, Dr John Gideon Millingen (1782-1862) wrote that "sympathy arises from the relative ties that mysteriously unite our several organs, however distant and unconnected they may appear; thus establishing a beauteous harmony between all the functions of the animal economy." [14]

Sympathy represented an order beyond the material; it was the interface at which matter and spirit, medicine and religion, met. The harmony that sympathy produced in the body was a spiritual one. As Millingen implies, sympathy could not be explained by any physical links between the organs; it did not work through the nerves or the bloodstream.

The classic account of sympathy was probably given by Robert Whytt, professor of the theory of medicine at

Edinburgh University, 1747-1766. In the important work *Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of those Disorders which are Commonly called Nervous, Hypochondriac, or Hysteric* (1764) he initially credited the nervous system with being the medium for sympathy, but then had to admit that the nerves cannot account for the phenomenon, since they do not all seem to join up. In other words, there does not seem to be a material vehicle for the operation of sympathy. Whytt concludes that we do not know enough about "the laws of union between the body and soul, to whose sentient power the sympathy of the nerves... must be at last referred". "Sympathy," he continues, "depends upon a principle that is not mechanical." [15]

Sympathy, then, was seen as the manifestation of spiritual order in the body. It created an organic harmony that was beyond the material. By implication, if our physiological sympathy was ordered, our health and our thinking would be more than material: they would partake of the spiritual. For a writer like De Quincey, this ideal health of body and mind would manifest itself as a kind of divine inspiration.

Since the stomach was the central and most important organ of the body, it had the greatest influence over sympathy. When the stomach was disordered, it gradually disordered all other organs too; it was a touchstone for the true working of sympathy. As De Quincey wrote, "the whole process and elaborate machinery of digestion" forms "the essential basis upon which the strength and health of our higher nature repose." [*CW* v14:p270]

An inspired writer's productions, then, were literally the work of his digestive organs – a healthy stomach ensured transcendent thoughts and writings. De Quincey believed, for instance, that his great literary idol William Wordsworth had a superbly healthy digestion. In 1852 he was moved to exclaim in some exasperation "Heavens! Had I but ever had his robust strength, and healthy stomach." [16] For de Quincey, safeguarding the health of his organs of digestion was a religious duty. He recommended a strict regime of exercise and constant attention to diet [*CW* v14: pp266-275]. Walking was the best form of exercise, and he claimed to walk up to 23 or 24 miles (37 or 38.6 km) a day [*CW* v14: p274]. This routine would presumably take up six to eight hours each day. He advised "a religious vigilance" towards "the *digestibility* of... food." [*CW* v14: p266] The best kind of food for the weak of stomach was beef, not too thoroughly cooked, and "a little bread (at least sixty hours old), or *game*." [*CW* v14: p271]

Such a regime was of little use to De Quincey himself. His experiences in London had done for his stomach, and his opium-taking merely exacerbated its condition. And if sympathy could broadcast spiritual harmony throughout a person's whole being, it could also radiate the misery of indigestion. By its very nature, sympathy easily flipped over into what De Quincey called "morbid sympathy". [*CW* v10: p446]

Seen in this context, De Quincey's uncontrollable visions, his apparitions, his disordered senses, body and mind, were symptoms of a spiritual disorder, a crisis of the soul in which 'mere' material nature claimed its right to generate not only his imagination but his very being. His works are sighs from the depths of his digestive tract, artefacts of what he felt to be his radical separation from the divine. His stomach problems were tragic, to an extent we struggle to comprehend today. They were literally hell. FT

His works are sighs from the digestive tract

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BELOW: W Bool's view of De Quincey's home at Nab Cottage, Ambleside.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

SIMON WILSON earns his keep as an independent writer, researcher and English teacher. His first publication was a letter to the Goole Times written when he was 10 and describing a UFO sighting. He lives in Munich with Lise and two cats.

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Psychedelica Victoriana

'Magic' mushrooms have long been associated with legends of fairies and fantastic literature. But was there a real link to the use of psycho-active fungi? MIKE JAY blows the dust off the bookshelves and finds out for us.

The first well documented hallucinogenic mushroom experience in Britain took place in London's Green Park on 3 October 1799. Like many such experiences before and since, it was accidental. A man subsequently identified only as 'JS' was in the habit of gathering small field mushrooms from the park on autumn mornings, and cooking them up into a breakfast broth for his wife and young family. But this particular morning, an hour after they had finished eating, the world began to turn very strange. JS found black spots and odd flashes of colour bursting across his vision; he became disorientated, and had difficulty in standing and moving around. His family were complaining of stomach cramps and cold, numb extremities. The notion of poisonous toadstools leapt to his mind, and he staggered out into the streets to seek help; but within 100 yards he had forgotten where he was going, or why, and was found wandering about in a confused state.

By chance, a doctor named Everard Brande happened to be passing through this insalubrious part of town, and was summoned to treat JS and his family. The scene that he discovered was so bizarre and unfamiliar that he would write it up at length and publish it in *The Medical and Physical Journal* later that year. The family's symptoms were rising and falling in giddy waves, their pupils dilated, their pulses and breathing becoming fluttering and laboured, then returning to normal before accelerating into another crisis. They were all fixated on the fear that they were dying, except for the youngest, the eight-year-old Edward S, whose symptoms were the strangest of all. He had eaten a large portion of the mushrooms and was 'attacked with fits of immoderate laughter' which his parents' threats could not subdue. He seemed to have been transported into another world, from which he would only return under duress

Flashes of colour burst across his vision and he had difficulty standing

to speak nonsense: "when roused and interrogated as to it, he answered indifferently, yes or no, as he did to every other question, evidently without any relation to what was asked".

Dr Everard Brande would diagnose the family's condition as the "deleterious effects of a very common species of agaric [mushroom], not hitherto suspected to be poisonous". Today, we can be more specific: this was clearly intoxication by Liberty Caps (*Psilocybe semilanceata*), the 'magic mushrooms' which grow plentifully across the hills, moors, commons, golf courses and playing fields of Britain every autumn. But though Dr Brande's account of the JS family's trip would not be forgotten and would continue to be cited in Victorian drug literature for decades, the 19th century would come and go without any conclusive identification of the Liberty Cap as the species in question. In fact, it would not be until Albert Hoffman, the discoverer of LSD, turned his attention to hallucinogenic mushrooms in the 1950s that the botanical identity of these and other

LEFT: Tales of Siberian shamans using fly agaric were known in Britain by the mid-19th century.
RIGHT: Fairy revels, from *The Book of British Ballads*, 1853.

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mushrooms containing psilocybin, LSD's chemical cousin, would be confirmed.

But if they were obscure to Victorian science, there was another tradition that would appear to explore the ability of certain mushrooms to whisk humans off to another world: Victorian fairy lore. Over the 19th century, a vast body of art and literature would connect mushrooms and toadstools with elves, pixies, hollow hills and the unwitting transport of subjects to fairyland, a world of shifting perspectives and dimensions seething with elemental spirits. Is it possible that the Victorian fairy tradition, underneath its somewhat twee and bourgeois exterior, operated as a conduit for a hidden world of homegrown psychedelia, parallel perhaps to the ancient shamanic and ritual uses of similar mushrooms in the New World? Were the authors of such otherworld narratives – Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, for example – aware of the powers of certain mushrooms to lead unsuspecting visitors to enchanted lands? Were they, perhaps, even writing from personal experience?

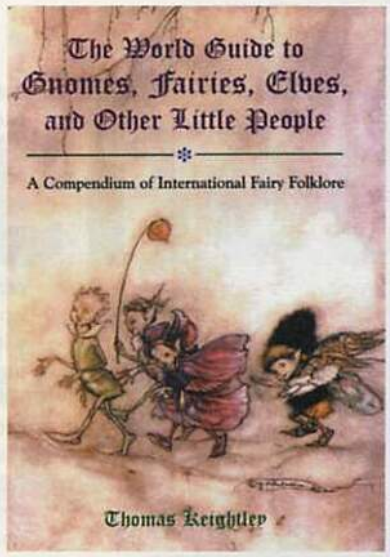
The JS family's trip in 1799 is a useful jumping-off point for such enquiries, because it establishes several basic facts. First – and contrary to the opinion of some recent American scholars – British (and European) magic mushrooms are not a recent arrival from the New World, but were part of our indigenous flora at least 200 years ago. Second, the species in question was unknown at the time, at least to science. Third, its hallucinogenic effects were unfamiliar, perhaps even unheard of – certainly unprecedented enough for a London doctor to feel the need to draw them to the attention of his medical colleagues.

In other scholarly contexts, though, the mind-altering effects of certain plants were already familiar. Through classical sources like *The Golden Ass*, the idea of witches' potions that transformed their subjects was an inheritance from antiquity. The *pharmacopœia* and *materia medica* of doctors and herbalists had long included the drug effects of common plants like belladonna and opium poppies, though mushrooms had featured in them rarely. The 18th century had turned up several more exotic examples from distant cultures: Russian explorers describing the use of fly agaric mushrooms in Siberia, Captain Cook observing the *kava-kava* ritual in Polynesia. In 1762 Carl Linnæus, the great taxonomist and father of modern botany, had compiled the first ever list of intoxicating plants: his monograph, entitled *Inebriantia*, had included opium, cannabis, datura, henbane and tobacco. Slowly, the study of such plants was emerging from the margins and tall tales of classical studies, ethnography, folklore and medicine and becoming a subject in its own right.

It was as part of this same interest that European fairy lore was also being assembled by a new generation of amateur folklore collectors such as the Brothers Grimm, who realised that the inexorable drift of peasant populations from country to city was beginning to dismantle centuries of folk

stories, songs and oral histories. The Victorian fairy tradition, as it emerged, would be imbued with this new sensibility which rendered rustic traditions no longer coarse, backward and primitive but picturesque and semi-sacred, an escape from the austerity of industrial living into an ancient, often pagan otherworld. Under the guise of 'innocence', sensual and erotic themes could be explored with a boldness not permitted in more realistic genres, and the muddy and impoverished countryside could be re-enchanted with imagery drawn from the classical and arabesque. Within this process, the lore of plants and flowers was carefully curated and woven into supernatural tapestries of flower-fairies and enchanted woods; and within this imaginal world of plants, mushrooms and toadstools began popping up all over. Fairy rings and toadstool-dwelling elves were recycled through a pictorial culture of motif and decoration until they became emblematic of fairyland itself.

This was a quiet but substantial image makeover for Britain's fungi. Previously, in herbals and medical texts, they had been largely shunned, associated with dung-heaps and poison; in Romantic poetry the smell of death had still clung to them ("fungous brood/coloured like a corpse's cheek", as Keats put it). Now, a new generation of folklorists began to wax lyrical about them, including Thomas Keightley, whose *The Fairy Mythology* (1850) was perhaps the most influential text on the fictional fairy tradition. Keightley gives Welsh and Gaelic examples of traditional names for fungi which invoke elves and Puck, and at one point wonders if such names refer to "those pretty small delicate fungi, with their conical heads, which are named Fairy-mushrooms in Ireland, where they grow so plentifully". This description is



a very good match for the Liberty Cap; though Keightley seems unaware of its hallucinogenic properties; he was struck simply by the pixie-cap shape of its head. In Ireland, the Gaelic slang for mushrooms is 'pookies', which Keightley associated with the elemental nature spirit Pooka (hence Puck); it's a slang term which persists in Irish drug culture today, although evidence for a pre-modern Gaelic magic mushroom culture is elusive.

But despite the presence of Liberty Caps in Britain, and their occasional tentative identification with nature spirits, it was a different mushroom which would become the immediately recognisable symbol for fairyland: the unmistakable red-and-white fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), which remains the classic 'fairy fungus' to this day in modern survivals of the Victorian fairy cult such as garden gnomes. The fly agaric is the most spectacular of the generally spectacular agaric family, which also includes the tawny Panther Cap (*Amanita pantherina*) and the prodigiously poisonous Death Cap (*Amanita phalloides*). The other salient fact about it is that it, too, is psychoactive. Unlike the Liberty Cap, which delivers psilocybin in fairly standard doses, the fly agaric contains an unpredictable mixture of alkaloids – muscarine, muscimol, ibotenic acid – which produce a cocktail of effects including disorientation and wooziness, drooling, sweats, numbness in the lips and extremities, nausea, muscle twitches, sleep and a vague, often retrospective sense of liminal consciousness and waking dreams.

Unlike the Liberty Cap, the fly agaric was hard to ignore or misidentify; its effects had long been known, though they had been classed simply as poisonous. Its name was derived from its ability to kill flies, and it was otherwise generally avoided. It was the aura of livid beauty and danger that it carried, rather than its chemistry, which made it such a popular fairy motif. Yet at the same time its psychic effects were coming to be understood, not from any tradition of its use in Britain, but from the recent discovery of its visionary role among the remote peoples of Siberia.

LEFT: Thomas Keightley's work on folklore was a major influence on the Victorian tradition of fairy fiction.

BELOW LEFT: Fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*).

BELOW RIGHT: Magic mushrooms, or liberty caps (*Psilocybe semilanceata*).

Sporadically through the 18th century, Swedish colonels and Russian explorers had returned from Siberia with tall tales of shamans, spirit possession and self-poisoning with brightly-coloured toadstools, but it was a Polish traveller named Joseph Kopék who, in 1837, was the first to write an account of his own experience with fly agaric. Kopék had been living in Kamchatka for two years when he was taken ill with a fever and was told by a local of a 'miraculous' mushroom that would cure him. He ate half of one, and fell into a vivid fever dream. "As though magnetised", he was drawn through "the most attractive gardens where only pleasure and

GORDON RUTTER

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beauty seemed to rule"; beautiful women dressed in white fed him with fruits, berries and flowers.

He woke after a long and healing sleep and took a second, stronger dose, which precipitated him back into sleep and the sense of an epic voyage into other worlds, teeming with "things which I would never imagine even in my thoughts". He relived swathes of his childhood, re-encountered friends from throughout his life, and even predicted the future at length with such confidence that a priest was summoned to witness. He concluded with a challenge to science: "If someone can prove that both the effect and the influence of the mushroom are non-existent, then I shall stop being defender of the miraculous mushroom of Kamchatka".

Kopék's toadstool epiphany was widely reported, and it began a fashion for re-examining elements of European folklore and culture and interpolating fly agaric intoxication into odd corners of myth and tradition. Perhaps the best example of this is the notion that the berserkers, the Viking shock troops of the 8th to 10th centuries, drank a fly agaric potion before going into battle and fighting like men possessed. This is regularly asserted as fact not only among mushroom and Viking aficionados but also in textbooks and encyclopædias; nevertheless, it's almost certainly a creation of the 19th century. There's no reference to fly agaric, or indeed to any exotic plant stimulants, in the sagas or eddas: the notion of mushroom-intoxicated berserker warriors was first suggested

Toadstool dwellings became emblematic of fairyland

ABOVE: Richard Doyle's 1875 *Fairy Land* employed the fungi-fairy connection, showing elves in repose beneath a toadstool.

BELOW: Carroll's Alice has often been read as an initiatory tale of drug experience.

by the Swedish professor Samuel Ödman in his *Attempt to Explain the Berserk-Raging of Ancient Nordic Warriors through Natural History* (1784), which was simply speculation based on 18th-century Siberian accounts. By the end of the 19th century, scholars like the Norwegian botanist Frederik Christian Schübeler had taken Ödman's suggestion as proof. The rest is history – or, more likely, urban legend.

Thus, by the mid 19th century, fly agaric had not only become an instantly recognisable fairyland motif but had also, and separately, been established as a portal to the land of dreams, and written into European folklore from exotic sources. This doesn't invalidate the claim that mushrooms in fairy literature represent the concealed or half-forgotten knowledge of their hallucinogenic properties – it's impossible to disprove such a negative – but it does show how fairy art and literature could have evolved without any such knowledge. Some may well have been directly drug-inspired – an obvious candidate would be John Anster Fitzgerald's phantasmic paintings of dreaming subjects surrounded by distended, other-dimensional goblin creatures – but the drug in question is far more likely to have been opium, the omnipresent Victorian panacea.

But there is a case where we can be more specific. The most famous and frequently debated conjunction of fungi, psychedelia and fairy-lore is the array of mushrooms and hallucinatory potions, mindbending and shapeshifting motifs in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Do Alice's adventures represent first-hand knowledge of the hallucinogenic effects of mushrooms? And, if not, how were they assembled without it?

The facts in the case could hardly be better known. Alice, down the rabbit hole, meets a blue caterpillar sitting on a mushroom, who tells her in a "languid, sleepy voice" that the mushroom is the key to navigating through her strange journey: "... one side will make you grow taller, the other side will make you grow shorter". Alice takes a chunk from each side of the mushroom, and begins a series of vertiginous transformations of size, shooting up into the clouds before learning to maintain her normal size by eating alternate bites. Throughout the rest of the book she continues to take the mushroom: entering the house of the duchess, approaching the domain of the march hare and, climactically, before entering the hidden garden with the golden key.

Since the 1960s all this has frequently been read as an initiatory work of drug literature, an esoteric guide to the other worlds opened up by mushrooms and other psychedelics – most memorably, perhaps, in Jefferson Airplane's 1967 psychedelic anthem *White Rabbit*, which conjures Alice's journey as a path of self-discovery where the stale advice of parents is transcended by the guidance received from within by "feeding your head". By and large, this reading has provoked outrage and disgust among Lewis Carroll scholars, who seem to regard his critics' accusations of pædophilia as inoffensive by comparison.

But there's plenty of evidence that medication and unusual states of consciousness exercised a profound fascination for Carroll, and he read about them voraciously. His interest was spurred by his own delicate health

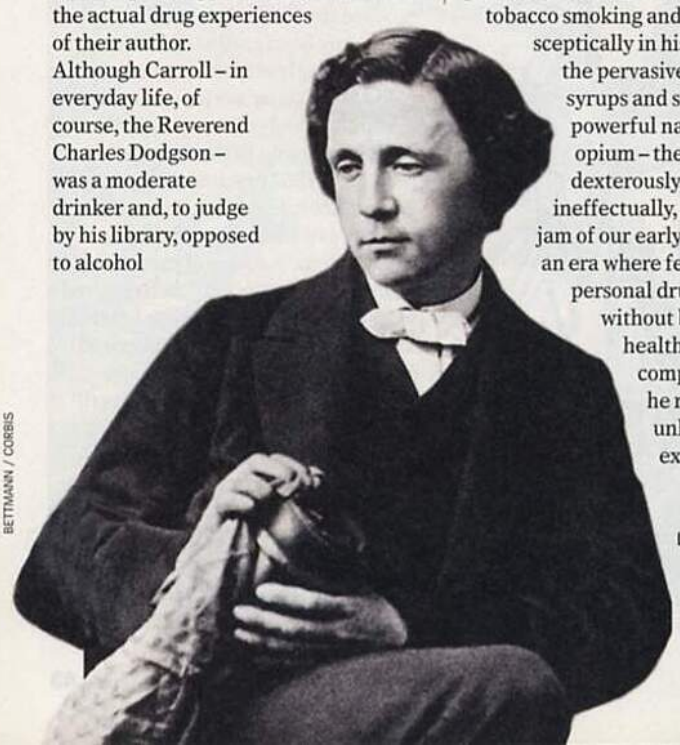
TOP LEFT: Alice meets the hookah-smoking caterpillar who is seated, of course, on a mushroom.

Grace Slick, of The Great Society and Jefferson Airplane, paraphrased Carroll in the song 'White Rabbit': "One pill makes you larger, and one pill makes you small – But the ones that Mother gives you don't do anything at all..."

– insomnia and frequent migraines – which he treated with homeopathic remedies, including many derived from psychoactive plants like aconite and belladonna. His library included several books on homeopathy as well as standard texts on mind-altering drugs like WB Carpenter's *Mental Physiology* (1874) and FE Anstie's influential compendium *Stimulants and Narcotics* (1864). He was greatly intrigued by the epileptic seizure of an Oxford student at which he was present, and visited St Bartholomew's Hospital in London in order to witness chloroform anæsthesia.

Nevertheless, it seems that Alice's mind-expanding journeys owed little to the actual drug experiences of their author. Although Carroll – in everyday life, of course, the Reverend Charles Dodgson – was a moderate drinker and, to judge by his library, opposed to alcohol prohibition, he had a strong dislike of tobacco smoking and wrote sceptically in his letters about the pervasive presence in syrups and soothing tonics of powerful narcotics like opium – the "medicine so dexterously, but ineffectually, concealed in the jam of our early childhood". In an era where few embarked on personal drug exploration without both robust health and a compelling reason, he remains a very unlikely self-experimenter.

Carroll was a moderate drinker and disliked tobacco



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LEFT: The Rev Charles L Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, in the early 1860s.

But it seems we can offer a more precise account. The scholar Michael Carmichael has demonstrated that, a few days before writing *Alice*, Carroll made his only ever visit to the Bodleian library, where a copy of Mordecai Cooke's recently published drug survey *The Seven Sisters of Sleep* (1860) had been deposited. The Bodleian copy of this book still has most of its pages uncut, with the notable exception of the contents page and the chapter on the fly agaric, entitled 'The Exile of Siberia'. Carroll was particularly interested in all things Russian: in fact, Russia was the only country he ever visited outside Britain. And, as Carmichael puts it, "Dodgson would have been immediately attracted to Cooke's *Seven Sisters of Sleep* for two more obvious reasons: he had seven sisters and he was a lifelong insomniac".

Cooke's chapter on fly agaric is, like the rest of *Seven Sisters*, a useful compendium of the drug lore and anecdotes that were familiar to the Victorians. It recalls Dr Everard Brande's account of the JS family; it rounds up the various Siberian accounts of fly agaric; it also focuses on precisely the effects of mushroom intoxication which Carroll wove into Alice's adventures. "Erroneous impressions of size and distance are common occurrences", Cooke records of the fly agaric. "A straw lying in the road becomes a formidable object, to overcome which, a leap is taken sufficient to clear a barrel of ale, or the prostrate trunk of a British oak."

Whether or not Carroll read this actual copy, it seems very likely that the properties of the mushroom in *Alice* were based on his encounter with Siberian fly agaric reportage rather than any hidden British tradition of its use, let alone the author's own. If so, he was neither the secret drug initiate that has been claimed, nor the Victorian gentleman entirely innocent of the arcane knowledge of drugs subsequently imputed to him. In this sense, Alice's otherworld experiences seem to hover, like much of Victorian fairy literature and fantasy, in a borderland between naïve innocence of such drugs and knowing references to them. FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

MIKE JAY is a regular contributor to FT. His most recent book is The Air Loom Gang: The Strange and True Story of James Tilly Matthews and his Visionary Madness (Bantam Press, 2003).

FURTHER READING

Mike Jay *Emperors of Dreams: Drugs in the Nineteenth Century* (Dedalus Press 2000, new edition forthcoming June 2004)

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Absinthe & alchemy

Writers have often accessed a level of visionary experience beyond that of everyday consciousness, but what happens when that vision, fuelled by occultism, alcohol and a nervous breakdown, begins to cross over into madness. GARY LACHMAN examines the case of August Strindberg.

In 1894, after years of painful struggle and almost univeral rejection by his countrymen, the Swedish playwright August Strindberg suffered a spiritual collapse, an emotional breakdown that left him incapable of creative work. That Strindberg had reached a dead end isn't surprising. Vilified in his homeland for naturalistic works like *Miss Julie* and *The Father*, he had already been through two divorces – a third was yet to come – as well as many years of impoverishment and the loss of his three children from his first marriage. His second marriage, to the Austrian journalist Frida Uhl, had just ended bitterly. This meant estrangement from yet another child and the loss of Frida's considerable dowry. At 45, penniless and alone, it's unsurprising that Strindberg questioned the point of going on. Yet he was a man who possessed demonic persistence, and the route out of his impasse led through one of the strangest episodes in the turbulent life of a master of modern literature.

After his failure in Sweden and a stint in Berlin, Strindberg looked to Paris for a last assault on fame. Paris was the cultural capital of the 19th century, and by 1893, some of Strindberg's works had already been performed there. But it wasn't just literary glory that attracted him to Paris. Like London, St Petersburg and other European capitals, the Paris of the *fin-de-siecle* had been bitten by the bug of occultism. Ever since 1856, when the renegade Catholic priest Alphonse Louis Constant – better known by his pen name of Eliphas Levi – invented modern 'occultism' with the publication of *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, Paris had been a haven for the esoterically inclined. Although a founder of naturalism, Strindberg had a deep interest in magic, mysticism and other forms of 'the occult'. He was also fascinated by science, and considered himself equal to its professionals. In 1893 he published his first work of speculative natural history, *Antibarbarus*, "Anti-barbarian," a work that pitted the man of genius against the academic

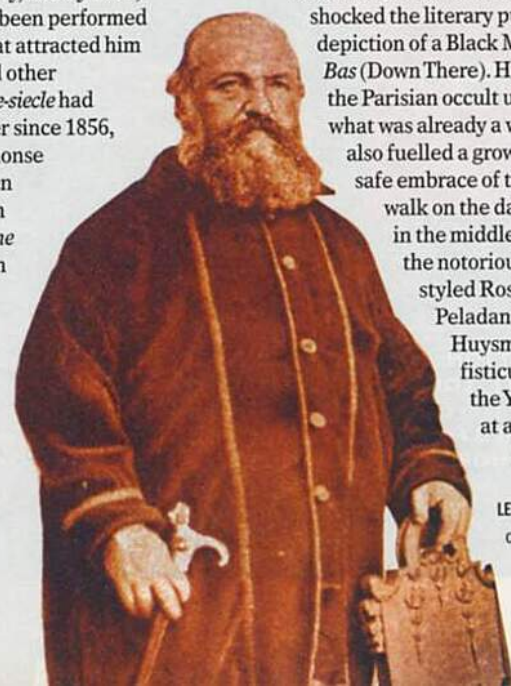
The Paris of the fin-de-siecle had been bitten by the bug of occultism

plodders, arguing that the poet's eye saw more deeply than the professor's methodical squint.

When it came to 'the occult', Strindberg's pet practice was alchemy.

According to one account, by 1894, there were an estimated 50,000 alchemists in Paris. Exaggeration or not, in the last years of the 19th century, Paris was undoubtedly a place where occultism mixed with the *avant garde*. In 1891, JK Huysmans, one time follower of Zola and author of the decadent classic *A Rebours* (Against Nature), had shocked the literary public with his graphic depiction of a Black Mass in his satanic novel, *La-Bas* (Down There). Huysmans' involvement with the Parisian occult underground popularised what was already a well-tenanted *demi-monde*; it also fuelled a growing fad for returning to the safe embrace of the Church, after a titillating walk on the dark side. After finding himself in the middle of an occult feud between the notorious Abbé Boullan and the self-styled Rosicrucian Josephin Sar Peladan – full of astral attacks and, as Huysmans called them, 'fluidic fisticuffs' – the man who kicked off the Yellow Decade ended his days at a Benedictine monastery.

Such Rosicrucian roistering



LEFT: Eliphas Levi, inventor of modern occultism.

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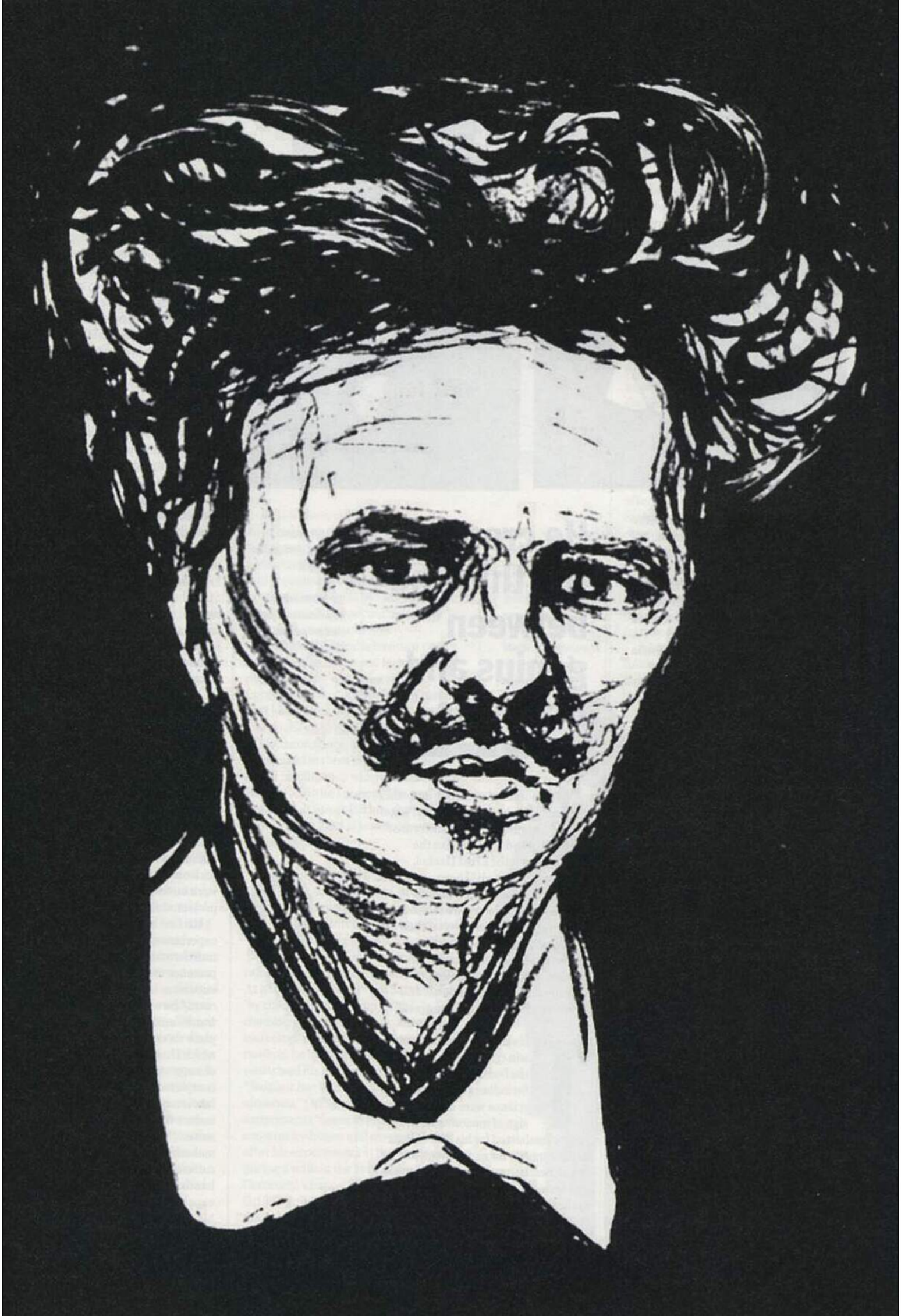
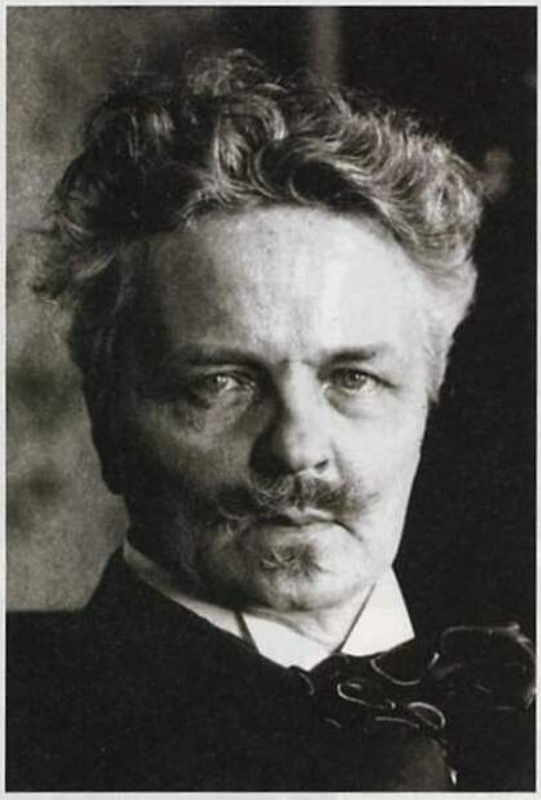
STRINDBERG: LITHOGRAPH BY EDVARD MUNCH, 1896.





LEFT: HULTON DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS RIGHT: MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

wasn't unusual. A few years before, the decadent poet Stanislas de Guaita, a devotee of Baudelaire, morphine addict (he would die of an overdose in 1897) and one-time student of Sar Peladan, fought an extended battle with his ex-master. Most of the fighting took place in print, but the recognition that magical warfare was not uncommon in *fin-de-siecle* Paris adds a depth to Strindberg's uncanny adventures, one that commentators sometimes miss. Undoubtedly, between 1894 and 1896, Strindberg came close to, and probably did experience, a schizoid episode. But it is just possible that the weird experiences he recounts in his obsessive record *Inferno* – based, in part, on his even more bizarre *Occult Diary* – did not originate solely in a great mind's pitiable crackup. Without doubt, all the ingredients for a complete mental breakdown are there: intense stress, loneliness, poverty, and an uncertain future, abetted in no small part by Strindberg's devotion to a popular magical elixir of the day – absinthe. But the strange events that make up Strindberg's *Inferno*, are precisely the sort that fuelled one of the burning questions of the age: the thin line between genius and madness. A line, by all accounts, Strindberg passed over frequently.

Throughout his career, Strindberg had periodic bouts of revulsion against literature. His artistic credo practically ensured this. "I regard it as my dreadful duty to be truthful," he wrote, "and life is indescribably ugly." Such sentiments prompted his plunge into alchemy. It may seem strange that, considering himself a scientist, Strindberg chose alchemy as his path to immortality. But his approach to science was anything but orthodox. His aim in *Antibarbarus* was to 'explain' the nature of sulphur,

He crossed the thin line between genius and madness

TOP LEFT: August Strindberg, photographed in the 1890s.

TOP RIGHT: Joseph-Antoine Boullan, renegade priest and occultist.

the 'transmutation' of carbon and other elements, and the composition of water and air. Claiming to be a 'transformist' like Darwin and a monist like the German naturalist Ernst Haekel, Strindberg declared: "I have committed myself to the assumption that all elements and all forces are related. And *if* they derive from one source, then they sprang into existence by means of condensation and attenuation, of copulation and crossbreeding, of heredity and transformation... and whatever else one cares to suggest."

This cavalier attitude didn't win critics' approval. When the book appeared, Strindberg's pretensions to science were dismissed as a sign of monomania, its author lambasted for his lack of logic and incapacity for experiment. But for the alchemist, transformation is the key, and Strindberg's speculative approach is in the great magical tradition. Writing to his young botanist friend Bengt Lindforss, Strindberg said: "I doubt all experiments... I believe rather in the depth of my conscious thought, or more correctly, my unconscious thought." His method was to put himself "into a state of unconsciousness, not with drink, but by distractions, games, cards, sleep, novels... without bothering about results, or acceptability, and something emerges that I can believe in..."

Weird as it seems, Strindberg's 'science' was right in line with the latest developments in art. Before his descent on Paris, he had published an essay on "The New Arts, or the Role of Chance in Artistic Creation." This, along with another article on "Deranged Sense Impressions," deals with the curious power of the mind to alter its perceptions; in a word, to 're-create' reality. Like many other artists and poets, Strindberg rebelled against the neat, orderly 'objective' Universe being revealed by an increasingly triumphant rationalist science. In its place, he argued for a world open to strange forces, and the influence of consciousness itself – a position made commonplace decades later with the rise of quantum physics. In "The New Arts", he describes the "oscillations of his sense impressions", and recounts how, seen from a certain angle, a cow becomes two peasants embracing each other, then a tree trunk, and then something else, and how the figures at a picnic are really a ploughman's coat and knapsack thrown over his cart. Strindberg would later describe his own method of writing as something like a trance state. It begins, he said, "with fermentation or some sort of agreeable fever which passes into ecstasy or intoxication." His considerable absinthe intake surely had a hand in this. Nevertheless, by the next century, with Dada and Surrealism, the notion that 'reality' is plastic, and that consciousness and chance affect what we experience, would become standard components of æsthetic theory.

But Strindberg was interested in more than a new approach to art. He took his alchemy seriously and soon after his arrival in Paris, he turned his back on the literary world and got to work on the archetypal alchemical project: making gold.

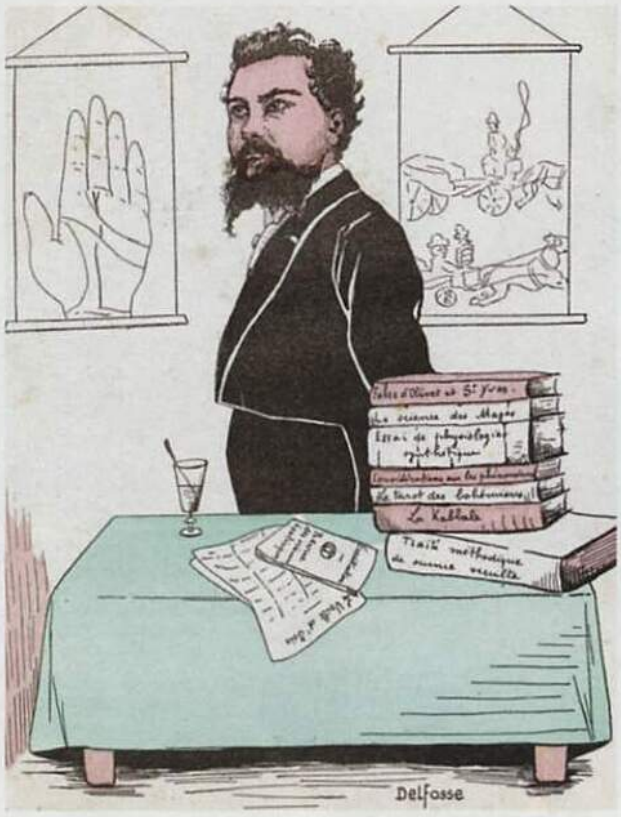
His first step was to obtain experimental proof of his ideas of transformation. He set out to prove the presence of carbon in sulphur. "Back once more in my miserable student's room," he writes, "I delved into my trunk and drew forth from their hiding place six crucibles of fine porcelain which I had robbed myself to buy. A pair of tongs and a packet of pure sulphur completed the apparatus of my laboratory. All that remained was to make a fire of furnace heat in the stove..." He did. The flame from his makeshift furnace was so great he soon suffered appalling burns, the skin on his hands "peeling off in scales." After more experiments, the burns worsened, and his chapped, cracked hands, irritated by coke dust, oozed blood. The pain was intolerable, yet, convinced of his success, Strindberg continued. The next

step was to show the presence of hydrogen and oxygen. But his apparatus was inadequate and his funds were dwindling. Destitute and in agony, Strindberg had reached another dead end. When the veins in his arms started to swell from blood-poisoning, friends collected money and put him in the Hôpital de Saint-Louis.

There, Strindberg made friends with a pharmacist who took an interest in his pursuits and allowed him to work in his laboratory. Urged on, he sent the results of his experiments to a firm of chemists to be analysed. Their tests proved positive: the sulphur he submitted did indeed contain carbon. More encouragement followed. A summary of Strindberg's scientific work appeared in *Le Petit Temps*, followed by long articles on 'Strindberg the scientist' in the highly respected periodical *La Science Français* and the widely read *Le Figaro*. On the strength of these, Strindberg petitioned to conduct further experiments using the laboratory at the Sorbonne. Although the faculty thought little of his work, he was granted permission, and he carried out his tests. Further signs of success appeared. An engineer at a chemical factory in Rouen who read of his experiments wrote to him saying that they threw light on "hitherto unexplained phenomena in the manufacture of sulphuric acid and sulphides." At the same time, a correspondence with the distinguished chemist Marcellin Berthelot suggested to Strindberg he was on the right track.

Soon Strindberg believed he had succeeded in extracting gold from iron. It was around this time that he came into contact with the Parisian alchemical underground. A young man named François Jollivet-Castelot, the author of *La Vie at l'ame de la matiere* (The Life and Spirit of Matter), which Strindberg had read with enthusiasm, had heard of Strindberg's work, and approached him, convinced the great playwright had actually succeeded in the alchemical dream. Jollivet-Castelot later became editor of an alchemical journal, *L'Hyperchimie*, and published Strindberg's account of his alchemical work, "The Synthesis of Gold." A rising star in the alchemical subculture, Strindberg's celebrity was assured when Gerard Encausse – better known under his occult pseudonym Papus – published an account of his work in his periodical *L'Initiation*. "August Strindberg," Papus wrote, "who combines vast knowledge with his great talent as a writer, has just achieved a synthesis of gold from iron." His work, Papus continued, "confirms all the assertions of the alchemists."

This was high praise. The author of several influential works, as leader of the Groupe Independent d'Études Esoterique and Grand Master of the Martinist Order, Papus was a powerful figure in the Parisian occult underground. He was also indirectly involved in the magical feud between Huysmans, Sar Peladan and De Guaita. When Papus elected Strindberg an



honorary Master of La Societé Alchimique de France, it's understandable the accolade went to his head. After years of obscurity, rejection and accusations of madness, to be accepted as a genius by men whose intelligence he respected must have given he some satisfaction.

Yet his alchemical adventure wasn't purely benign. Nurtured by his occult obsessions, his 'deranged sense impressions' began to get out of hand. At first he chalked his weird perceptual mutations up to chance and the vagaries of his unconscious, but increasingly he recognised in them the hands of an occult intelligence which he called 'the Powers' and 'the Unseen.' The world these occult forces led him through soon turned into a kind of waking dream – or nightmare.

On a walk to the Luxembourg Gardens, he spied his initials, A S, painted on a shop window, rising out of a silver-white cloud, surmounted by a rainbow. He took this as a positive omen. At a stall on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, 'by chance' he picked up an old chemistry text by the Franco-Spanish toxicologist Mateo Orfila. Opening it at random, he hit on a passage that confirmed his alchemical intuition. "Sulphur has been included among the elements," Orfila wrote, and certain experiments "seem to prove that it contains hydrogen and oxygen". Later, after his experiments at the Sorbonne, during a walk in the Montparnasse Cemetery, 'chance' drew Strindberg to Orfila's grave, which he didn't know was there, and a later walk down the Rue d'Assas found him oddly drawn to a monastery-like building. It turned out to be the Hotel Orfila. Strindberg soon settled in for a short stay in Purgatory.

Never easy on himself, Strindberg felt he was being tested. He talked to 'the Powers', thanked them, asked them advice. He saw their work everywhere. Money appeared 'miraculously', allowing him to buy instruments. Observing the embryo of a walnut under a microscope, Strindberg was convinced he could see two tiny hands, clasped in prayer, emerging from the seed. Another sign. On a 'chance' trip to the country, a stone was transformed into a statue of a Roman knight. Pleased with this effect, he looked in the direction the 'statue' was pointing. On a wall he saw the initials F and S. He first thought of his second wife, Frida Strindberg. But then he realised that it was really the chemical symbols for iron and sulphur (Fe and S), the ingredients, he believed, for alchemical gold (alternatively, the ingredients of iron pyrites, or 'Fool's Gold'). The weirdness continued. A crumpled pillow became a Michelangelo bust, then a likeness of the Devil. A shadow in his room became a statue of Zeus. He had precognitive dreams. A dead friend appeared, offering a large American coin. When Strindberg reached for it, the friend disappeared. The next morning he received a letter from America. Arriving months late, it informed him of an offer of 12,000 francs to write something for the Chicago Exhibition. But the deadline had passed, and the money, a fortune for Strindberg, was lost.

A host of strange fortean simulacra followed, of which I can mention only a few. In a zinc bath that he used for making gold by the 'wet method', he saw a remarkable 'landscape'. There were "small hills covered with conifers... plains, with orchards and cornfields... a river... the ruins of a castle," all formed by the evaporation of salts of iron. It was only months later, during a visit to his daughter, who he hadn't seen for two years, that he recognised his vision as the landscape around his mother-in-law's house. Making gold by the 'dry method' produced its own terrors. Destitute once again, Strindberg felt he had to succeed. But 'the Powers' decreed otherwise. After melting borax in terrific heat, all he found was a skull with two glistening eyes. On another occasion a chunk of charred coal revealed a bizarre formation: a body with a rooster's head, a human trunk, and distorted limbs. It looked, he remarked, "like one of the demons that

ABOVE: Gerard Encausse, better known under his occult pseudonym of Papus, helped publicise Strindberg's alchemical experiments.

BELOW: J K Huysmans, literary chronicler of the Paris occult scene.

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used to perform in the witches' sabbaths of the Middle Ages." Later discoveries included two gnomes in billowing garments embracing each other, and a Madonna and Child, done up in Byzantine style.

A reading of the Scandanavian mystic Swedenborg convinced Strindberg that his alchemical experiments were unholy, and that for his 'salvation', 'the Powers' had consigned him to Hell. His torments took the form of various magical attacks. Strindberg was undoubtedly highly-strung and thin-skinned, and some of his 'tortures' – such as finding that his hotel room window opened on the toilets of a neighbouring building – smack more of inconvenience and discomfort than anything else. But some are more in line with the magical goings-on familiar to the time. Strindberg began to feel there was an occult conspiracy against him. Letters he discovered in the Hotel Orfila convinced him someone was spying on his alchemical activities. The sound of pianos playing eerie, disturbing music followed him everywhere. He was convinced that the Polish decadent writer Stanislav Przybyszewski had come from Berlin to kill him.

Something like a persecution complex developed. His 'supersensitive nerves' detected strange subterranean vibrations. The idea that he was the target of evil emanations obsessed him. Baffling 'coincidences' appeared everywhere. Mysterious noises from the rooms next door tormented him, and he was convinced that someone was trying to kill him using an 'electrical machine.' He walked around Paris in a state of tense expectancy, awaiting "an eruption, an earthquake, or a thunderbolt." Friends and acquaintances now became demons, sent by 'the Powers' to show him the error of his ways, and each night he suffered anxiety attacks in which he endured the recurrent onslaughts of his torturers. For some time, because he had rejected the teachings of Madame Blavatsky, he was convinced his assailants were a group of theosophists. As with his numerous simulacra, once the restraints of reason were lifted – "I no longer try to find a motive for my actions. I act extempore" – he saw signs of his persecution everywhere.

Absinthe contained oil of thuja, a powerful hallucinogen

Eventually, through Swedenborg's philosophy, Strindberg passed through his ordeal, convinced 'the Powers' had put him through the mill in order to aid his spiritual evolution. By 1897, his interest in alchemy abated, and the urge to write had returned, one product of which was *Inferno*. In 1898 he began work on *To Damascus*, perhaps his greatest play. His belief in 'the Powers', however, remained for the rest of his life.

It's possible that Strindberg's taste for absinthe was the real reason for his strange experiences. As drunk in his day, absinthe contained oil of thuja, a powerful and addictive hallucinogen. Habitual use resulted in anxiety, fear, hallucinations, a sense of paralysis and paranoia – all symptoms clearly experienced by Strindberg. And yet, his 'occult' episodes included periods when he apparently went without drink.

ABOVE: The exciting life led by absinthe drinkers in a tavern, c. 1880.

So what happened? Strindberg was an enormously creative individual, with incredible powers of imagination, a terrific will, and an ability to withstand blows that would destroy most people. Like many other creative individuals, he at times gained access to hitherto unknown potentials – for lack of a better word, 'hidden powers'. Yet, for a variety of reasons, he was also plagued by a paralysing sense of guilt. My own belief is that, dammed up as they were by his perpetual self-revulsion, Strindberg's creative energies emerged in other ways – some simply mad, some paranormal – and the 'persecution' he endured was the work of his own unconscious, rebelling against the abandonment of his real task. As he himself wrote, "In the great crises of life, when existence itself is threatened, the soul attains transcendent powers."

This is not to say Strindberg's alchemical experiences were worthless, merely a distraction from his real work. I'm inclined to think Strindberg himself knew this. Without the artist's hand to guide them, Strindberg's 'deranged sense impressions' became eerie, oppressive fantasies aided, if not actually created, by a powerful intoxicant. 'The Powers', however, knew better, and the 'Unseen hand' – Strindberg's own – showed him the error of his ways. FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

GARY LACHMAN was a founding member of the pop group Blondie. He has written for TLS, Guardian, Independent and MOJO and is a regular contributor to Fortean Times. His latest book is The Dedalus Book of the Occult: A Dark Muse (Dedalus 2004).

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AN ACID TEST FOR ESP

ANDY ROBERTS tells the story behind the world's biggest telepathy experiment – a heady cocktail of parapsychology, hallucinogens and the loud, ecstatic music of the Grateful Dead.

In December 2000 parapsychologist Richard Wiseman announced he was going to conduct the "world's largest telepathy experiment" in London [**FT143:24**]. Unfortunately Wiseman's experiment, using up to 100 telepathic 'senders', fell well short of the far more fortean approach taken by a group of parapsychologists and musicians towards the end of the psychedelic era in America.

The *real* 'world's largest telepathy experiment' actually took place in February 1971 at Port Chester in New York State. Far from being conducted in the psychically arid test conditions of a laboratory, it was hosted by the world's strangest rock and roll band, The Grateful Dead. The Dead themselves are no strangers to fortean phenomena, and the synchronicities surrounding their gigs at the Great Pyramid of Giza and percussionist Micky Hart's encounter with a cursed human skull drum are the stuff of legend [see **FT88:34-38, FT164:24-25**]. Unarguably at the cutting edge of genuinely psychedelic music, and all that entails, the Grateful Dead were forged in the crucible of 1960s American West Coast acid culture, playing to huge crowds where band and audience were under the influence of the strongest psychedelics. Their music to this day both encompasses and surpasses all contemporary and historical forms, leading one critic to define their œuvre as "music beyond idiom". Accounts of the sheer power generated at a Grateful Dead gig are legion, band and followers believing that when they are playing at full throttle a temporary psychedelic psychic 'church' is created in which musicians and celebrants are joined in a sort of 'wholly communion', becoming a single entity with one mind.

Parapsychologists became seriously interested in the Grateful Dead

Micky Hart puts this succinctly: "Our main focus was the idea of group mind. We saw the Grateful Dead as a group mind and one in which we were able to share with the audience. We were able to take an image and project it into the audience and send it to receptive receivers." With this kind of belief it was only a matter of time before the parapsychological fraternity became seriously interested in the Grateful Dead.

The link came in the form of parapsychologist and author Stanley Krippner, at that time director of the Maimonides Dream Laboratory in Brooklyn, New York. Krippner had been working at the far edges of parapsychology for several years and since 1964 had been involved in

RIGHT HAND IMAGE: REDFERNS / MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE

JULIETTE LIESENFELD

experiment can be difficult because, unless the images received are exactly the same as the ones sent, the results are open to scepticism at best, ridicule at worst. However, at least two of the images received appeared to be within acceptable parameters and Krippner felt that with some important changes to the methodology of the experiment he could improve the results.

Buoyed up by the apparent success of the Holy Modal Rounders experiment, Krippner planned something much more ambitious involving the Grateful Dead. This was to take place at each gig of the Dead's six-night run at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, New York State, during February 1971. The Port Chester shows themselves have become legendary in 'Deadhead' circles as being fantastic examples of the transformative and redemptive power of music. Listening to them you are aware of a music being created which is truly 'out there', an ideal backdrop against which to conduct a telepathy experiment.

Contrary to the somewhat shambolic psychedelic milieu in which the Grateful Dead existed, the Port Chester experiments were planned in some detail. In attempting to refine the methodology used at the Holy Modal Rounders experiment, Krippner's team made some radical changes. It was decided to make the instructions to the senders (the audience) much more specific, and also to make them aware of the physical location of one of the receivers. To insure against the possibility of the target images being leaked, either consciously or unconsciously, they were to be selected at random immediately prior to being shown to the senders.

For the Port Chester experiments just two receivers, Malcolm Bessent and Felicia Parise, were chosen. Both were experienced 'psychic sensitives'. For the duration of the experiment Bessent was to be observed whilst under laboratory conditions, sleeping at the Maimonides Dream Laboratory, 45 miles (72km) away. Parise was to sleep in her flat where she would be telephoned several times during the night and asked to describe the content of her dreams.

The audiences on each night were told only about Bessent's involvement in the experiment. This was so that the Dream Laboratory staff could monitor 'intentionality', i.e. whether or not the senders' knowledge of who was taking part and where they were could affect results. In this case, if intentionality was relevant it would be expected that Bessent would have more success in receiving the images than Parise. Conversely, if it were the receiver whose subconscious mind reached out and located the target images, both senders could be expected to score equally well.

Krippner's assistant, Ronnie Mastrian, was in the audience at the Capitol Theatre and immediately prior to each gig selected one of two envelopes by the flipping of a coin. Each envelope contained a series of slides containing images which were to be the focus of the evening's experiment. The selected transparencies were loaded into a projector and shown on the stage backdrop. At 11.30pm when the concert was well under way, the bemused and excited audience read the instruction slides; "1) You are about to participate in an ESP experiment, 2) In a few seconds you will see a picture, 3) Try using your ESP to 'send' this picture to Malcolm Bessent, 4) He will try to dream about the picture. Try to send it to him, 5) Malcolm Bessent is now at the Maimonides dream laboratory in Brooklyn".

One of six randomly selected pictures was then projected onto the stage backdrop for 15 minutes whilst the Grateful Dead played. Unusually for the Dead, there was no psychedelic light show at any of the Port Chester gigs, thus making the projected images *the* visual focus of the concert.

When Malcolm Bessent had been observed to be engaged in REM (Rapid Eye Movement) activity for 10 minutes, he was woken and asked what he was dreaming. This took place several times throughout the night. Felicia Parise was contacted by 'phone at 90 minute intervals and her dreams recorded. On the following morning, both subjects were asked to add any details they had missed, together with any associations they attached to their dreams. Their recollections were tape-recorded and transcribed for use by the evaluators.

At the end of the six-show run, the two evaluators were each given the full receivers' transcripts together with copies of the images used. The evaluators, working independently of each other, the telepathy

ABOVE: The Capital Theatre, Port Chester, New York State, as seen in December 2003.

BELOW LEFT: The team of ESP testers from the Maimonides Dream Laboratory, Brooklyn, New York City, date unknown . Stanley Krippner can be seen on the left.

BOTTOM: Malcolm Bessent, one of the two receivers for the Port Chester ESP experiments, seen in 1996.

RIGHT: FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY / LEFT: FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY / GUY LYON PLAYFAIR

testing the hypothesis "that sleeping subjects are able to incorporate aspects of randomly selected target stimuli into their dreams". Krippner was also a Dead fan and had used their music in previous ESP experiments. The Grateful Dead's biographer, Dennis McNally, described, in *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead* (Bantam, NY, 2002), Krippner's entry into the Dead's world: "Krippner was yet another of the fascinating people the Dead had attracted, a distinguished psychologist who was comfortable with the rational study of 'fuzzy' things like ESP, or psychedelics, or both together."

Jerry Garcia, the Dead's lead guitarist, and Micky Hart first met Stanley Krippner at a party in 1970. McNally recalls, "Eventually Krippner found himself in conversation with Garcia, who wondered about the potential interaction of various altered states of consciousness, for instance sleep and the psychedelic state, and whether or not that could aid sensitivity to ESP. Their conversation yielded the Dream Experiment, which was deemed worthy of publication in a formal, academically refereed journal of psychology."

Krippner initially conducted a smaller version of the Port Chester experiments, in which ESP, hundreds of people, rock music and psychedelics were brought together. This took place at a Holy Modal Rounders concert on 15 March 1970 where five volunteer telepathy 'receivers' were selected for the experiment. Each receiver was told the geographical location of the concert and asked to 'tune in' at midnight, when certain images would be telepathically projected by the audience. The receivers were situated at random locations within a 100-mile (160km) radius of the concert venue. The target image chosen to be projected was 'birds', and a sequence of appropriate moving images and transparencies was prepared by the psychedelic light show operator Jean Mayo. These consisted of a film about eagles and a number of slides depicting photographs of various birds, together with key symbols such as the Egyptian hieroglyph for bird and phrases such as 'Think birds' and 'fly high'. One crucial slide sequence showed a mythological phœnix appearing and disappearing in flames.

BELOW: The Grateful Dead and their management at a Press Conference following their arrest for possession of marijuana at their now legendary address -- 710 Ashbury, San Francisco, 5 October 1967. This has passed down in Deadhead lore as the 'Pursuit of Happiness' speech.

Garcia wondered whether the psychedelic states could aid ESP

The audience were informed verbally that when these images appeared they were to concentrate on them and 'send' them telepathically. To create the strongest link between the target images, the power of the music and the audience, the images were projected during the band's performance of 'If You Want to Be a Bird'. This song was already fixed in the audience's minds as it had been featured in the 1969 cult film *Easy Rider*, during a sequence in which Jack Nicholson looned around on the back of a motorcycle.

Midnight duly passed and the audience, high on music and drugs and open to the potential of telepathic contact, did their best to project the chosen images into the collective unconscious. The five receivers reported variously, 'something mythological, like a Griffin or a Phoenix', 'a snake', 'grapes', 'an embryo in flames growing into a tree'. The fifth receiver was singer Richie Havens, who also reported seeing a mythological creature like a phœnix.

Was this experiment successful? Maybe. Interpreting a telepathy

AP PHOTO

CORBIS / PHILIP GOULD

receivers or Dream Laboratory staff, were asked to read the tape transcripts. They then recorded on a 100-point scale any correspondences between the dream recollections and the images projected during the experiment.

As with the Holy Modal Rounders experiment, the results were encouraging but open to wide interpretation. One example of this dichotomy comes from the 19 February gig where a painting called 'The Seven Spinal Chakras' was projected. This showed a male in the yogic full lotus position, deep in meditation, each chakra vividly illuminated. When Bessent was awakened during this particular experiment he remembered dreaming he was, "very interested in... using natural energy... thinking about rocket ships... an energy box and... a spinal column". This correspondence was classed as a success, although sceptics will have their doubts.

Another debatable success came from the night of 20 February when the surrealist painter Magritte's 'Philosophy in the Boudoir' was selected and projected. The painting is of a headless woman in a transparent robe. This time Bessent dreamed about a "little girl's doll" which Krippner believed demonstrated "a degree of correspondence".

The Dream Laboratory's report on the experiment noted: "The average evaluation of the two judges was computed for each pair of dream transcripts and

a painting called 'the seven spinal chakras' was projected

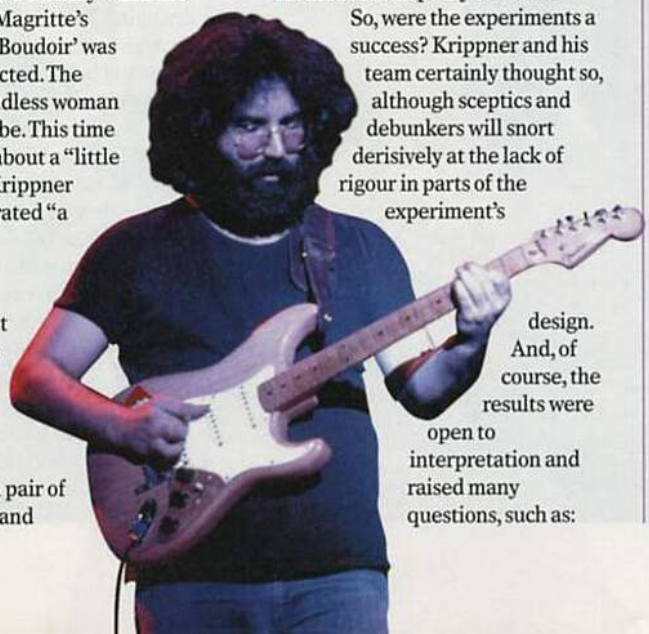
target pictures. If coincidence, rather than ESP, had been operating, the judges' evaluation of the correct transcript/target pairs would have been higher than all other pairs one time out of six. For Miss Parise, one correct pair obtained the highest rating. In the case of Mr Bessent, the judges gave the highest score to the correct pairs four times out of six... Thus, for Mr Bessent, the ESP hypothesis is supported. Further, some support is given to the position that the agents must know who the target is to be transmitted to and where he is located for telepathy to occur."

So, were the experiments a success? Krippner and his team certainly thought so, although sceptics and debunkers will snort derisively at the lack of rigour in parts of the experiment's design. And, of course, the results were open to interpretation and raised many questions, such as: how clearly and exactly does a received image have to correspond with the image projected? Does the *whole* dream have to correspond with the target image? – and so on. No-one said parapsychology was easy!

Other rock commentators doubted the psychedelic component of the experiment. Former band manager (and not entirely reliable commentator) Rock Scully, in his book *Living With The Dead* (Little, Brown, 1995), expressed a jaundiced view of the event; "The results turned out to be shady... the Port Chester audience is 18- and 19-year-old kids who've hopped over the border from Connecticut to get drunk and are all screwed up on beer and hard liquor." Hardly the blissed out psychonauts of mid-60s San Francisco's Haight Ashbury who were the Dead's original constituency.

In both design and organisational terms, the Holy Modal Rounders and Grateful Dead telepathy experiments probably weren't as rigorous as the parapsychological establishment would have liked. But from a fortean angle the results are not really the point. No, the point is that all concerned had the courage of their convictions and strength of belief to attempt the manifestation of a wild talent, involving over 6,000 people. These experiments were, to date, the largest telepathy tests conducted outside of laboratory conditions, with over 2,000 people being involved at each concert. They reflected a zeitgeist, rapidly fading from our memories, in which it was believed the human subconscious had limitless potential and could be accessed and directed by drugs, music and intent. Contrast that with the general drabness of psychical research in the early 21st century! Now largely forgotten, the world's biggest telepathy experiment has become just another footnote in the annals of both parapsychology and rock and roll. Ah well, I guess you had to be there! FT

ABOVE: "A temporary psychedelic church" – Deadheads frolicking among the trees during a 1988 concert at the Greek Theatre, Berkeley, California.



LEFT: Jerry Garcia contemplates the cosmic realities contained within the Fender Stratocaster.

CORBIS / PHILIP GOULD

RECOMMENDED READING

Montague Ullman, Stanley Krippner and Alan Vaughan *Dream Telepathy* (Hampton Roads, 2003)

Dennis McNally *A Long Strange Trip* (Bantam Press, 2002)

Blair Jackson et al *Grateful Dead: The Illustrated Trip* (Dorling Kindersley, 2004)

David Gans *Conversations with the Dead* (Faber & Faber, 2002).

RECOMMENDED SURFING

Official Grateful Dead site: *www.dead.net*

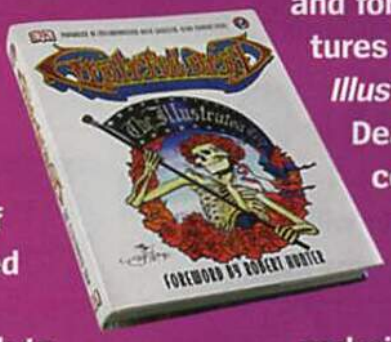
AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ANDY ROBERTS is a veteran fortean researcher, ufologist and Deadhead, as well as being a regular contributor to *FT*. His latest book, with Nick Redfern, is **Strange Secrets: Real Government Files on the Unknown** (Paraview 2003).

COMPETITIONS PAGE

1 Grateful Dead: The Illustrated Trip

If Andy Roberts's feature has piqued your interest in the phenomenon that was/is the Grateful Dead, then a good way of getting to grips with their long, strange trip is to dive in to Dorling Kindersley's monumental new history of one of the world's greatest bands. Packed with hundreds of rare photos and hung on a timeline stretching back to the band's roots in folk, country and blues and forward to the post-Garcia adventures of the surviving members, *The Illustrated Trip* is the ultimate Deadhead toilet read, a 500-page cornucopia of facts, figures and features that puts the Dead in their historical and cultural context and highlights their enduring impact on American music.



Thanks to Dorling Kindersley we have THREE copies of GRATEFUL DEAD: THE ILLUSTRATED TRIP, each worth £30.00, to give away. Just tell us:

WHICH GRATEFUL DEAD SONG CONTAINS THE LINES:

"Julie catch a rabbit by his hair/Come back step, like to walk on air"?

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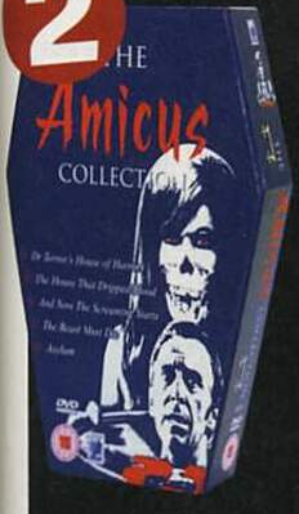
2 The Amicus Collection



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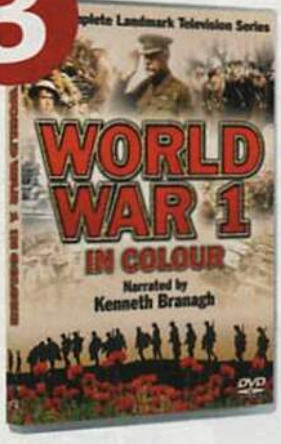
3 World War 1 in Colour



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WHICH BRITISH PAINTER SERVED IN THE ARTISTS' RIFLES BEFORE GOING ON TO WORK AS AN OFFICIAL WAR ARTIST IN BOTH THE FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WARS?

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forum

Astral plane crash

JEFF KOYEN recalls a self-induced encounter with higher dimensions and wonders if he ever really came back...

Jeff Koyen is the editor-in-chief of *New York Press*, a weekly newspaper in New York City. His last contribution to *Fortean Times* explored the Greek tradition of the evil eye.

The first time I smoked *Salvia*, I was sitting on my living room floor with my then-girlfriend. She'd just taken her first hits, to no effect. She reported feeling a little high, but there were no hallucinations, certainly no "incredible five-minute trip," as had been described to us by a friend.

We'd been warned, though: smoking *Salvia divinorum* is a bit more complicated than smoking marijuana or hashish. There are certain things one must do in order to facilitate the psychedelic's efficacy. First and foremost, use a butane lighter: the leaves must be incinerated quickly and completely, and your Zippo doesn't put out enough heat. Second, use a bong or water pipe: the smoke must be inhaled immediately and held for thirty seconds, and the water can provide a cooling mechanism. Still, as my friend discovered, even when one does follow procedure there's no guarantee that the psychedelic will take hold.

Salvia divinorum has been used for years by native America shamans, though for exactly how long is a matter of debate. Shaman healers living in the Oaxaca state of Mexico are called *curanderos*; in Mazatec they are called *chotacine*, which translates as "one who knows." According to the *curanderos*, they use *Salvia* whenever they need to travel into the supernatural world to gather information that eludes their corporeal selves. Uses include divination, diagnosis of sickness and disease, and even locating missing persons and objects. The leaves, which resemble their cousins in the mint family, are traditionally chewed and held in the mouth like tobacco or crushed into a juice.

At the time of writing, *Salvia* is legal everywhere in the world and very easy to obtain via the web, often sold by home-growers. Research shows it to be non-addictive, and users report no increased tolerance after repeated use. In fact some *Salvia* enthusiasts report an increased sensitivity after multiple uses. Presumably, their bodies have learned how to process the active ingredient, Salvinorin A, more efficiently and effectively.

My companion tried two or three more times, yet still felt nothing more than light-headedness. I refilled the little glass bowl, hit it with the sharp blue flame and sucked in the cool, white smoke. Immediately, I felt something lurking on the edge of my awareness, something a bit frightening and a bit exhilarating, something waiting to be invited into my head. I quickly packed another bowl and fired it up.

Suck it in. Hold thirty seconds. Exhale.

Now then; there's something –

Something –

– was coming –

Fast.

And like – *that*! – I was in another world. I felt myself pulled backward by strings that had suddenly and quite inexplicably become embedded in my shoulders. I was a puppet dropped by its master, now called back into action. The room around me disappeared in waves of concentric circles, like ripples in a pond. As I looked around me, my bookshelf, my couch, my coffee table, my dog... All faded away as the waves rushed over and past them, sweeping them out to an unseen sea. And the strings – they pulled me back to such a degree that I nearly fell over and onto my back.

I knew my girlfriend was in the room, but I couldn't speak to her. I could only motion that I was fine by holding up my left index finger in the "just wait a second" gesture. Despite my complete disorientation, I knew everything would be fine just as soon as I got back into the room.

As soon as I got back into the room.

For what seemed like an eternity, I was elsewhere and it was fine by me. My physical body didn't seem so important, my struggles with the phone company, the electric company, my work – none of these things mattered. Life made a lot more sense on this grander scale, and it made more sense for what seemed like hours.

While the *Salvia* trip was more intense than any LSD or mushrooms I'd ever taken, it lasted only a few minutes, perhaps recalling the adage that the candle that burns twice as bright burns twice as fast. The ripples slowed to a gentle throb, a pleasant heartbeat surging around me. Now, with every pulse, my bookshelf, my couch, my coffee table and my dog calved away from themselves, chunks of glacier falling into the surrounding water. The trappings of my life were peeling away like the outer leaves of an artichoke. Then the pulsing slowed to a stop, the tide went out, and I was back in my living room, once again a forgotten puppet.

In my absence, my companion had taken another hit and found herself in her own other world. The only similarity between our trips was the sensation of being pulled backward.

For the next hour, we sat on the couch, silent and still, continuing to float. I enjoyed an incredibly vivid recollection of a recent trip on the Underground from Heathrow to central London. I saw the countryside rush past. I read the station announcements and recognised the names that had not been familiar to me at the time. I could see every person who had been around me, could see what they were wearing, could hear how they spoke. Of course, there's nothing to say that the people in my recollection were the same people who *had* been there originally; but that's a discussion for another time.

After a bit, we retired to the bedroom, but didn't sleep. We remained a bit high, mellow but energised, chatty but not overly animated. Eventually, we nodded off.

Four hours later, a little after 9 am, the phone rang: my girlfriend's concerned mother, calling to inquire if we were alright. "Sure, sure, why?" I managed.

"Turn on the news. Two planes flew into the World Trade Center."

I hung up the phone and turned on the television.

"Are we still tripping?" I asked.

"I don't know."

She stared at the live broadcast on the TV screen. I leaned out the bedroom window and got a clear view of the burning towers from my Brooklyn neighborhood. I grabbed the dog, my camera and led us down to the riverbank, where we watched the second tower collapse.

More than once since that day, I've wondered whether or not I ever emerged from my *Salvia* hallucination. Is it possible for one to disconnect from reality, yet continue to function in something resembling it?

There is a rumored history of depression and paranoia in the lower branches of my family. What if my drug experiment triggered a break from everyday life caused by a dormant chemical imbalance in my brain? What if there was an unknown agent of insanity lurking just beneath the surface of my psyche, biding its time, looking for the perfect excuse to throw the switch from real life to not-so-real life?

Is it possible for my brain to have truly taken control, directing events as it sees fit yet keeping everything plausible *enough* so that I don't rebel against its control? If so, then what's the difference between this scenario and what we consider to be normal reality? The classic bio-philosophical argument comes to mind: How do you know that the color blue you see is the same blue everyone else sees?

Who's to say all of this isn't already just a construct built *of* my mind *for* my mind? What do the insane see around them? Can one be institutionalised, sitting in a comatose or catatonic state, yet continue to function in his or her own world, with the firm conviction that their perceived reality is solid and concrete?

According to one website, some *Salvia* users have reported "living an entire lifetime" during their trip, or "becoming paint on the wall." Is it so far-fetched to consider that I'm still in the hallucination? Shamans claim to travel to other realms of existence, speak with other beings and eventually return to their physical forms, presumably with helpful knowledge or insight. Will I eventually touch down, find myself in my living room a mere five minutes after taking that second hit?

The problem, as I see it, is that I have smoked *Salvia* since that night and enjoyed similar experiences. It just doesn't seem right that I could hallucinate while inside a hallucination! Still, I think of one of the warnings in the *Salvia* FAQ:

"Individuals with a family history of schizophrenia or early onset mental illness should be extremely careful because strong psychoactives have been known to trigger latent psychological and mental problems."

I wonder if it might be time to call my parents to get a more detailed history of the family's mental background. As if that will do any good at this stage... FT

Salvia Divinorum is available at plenty of places online, and there are several *Salvia* discussion forums and listserves. The author's experiments were undertaken with standardised salvinorin A, enhanced leaf available from sagewisdom.org. New salvia users are urged to read the FAQ and should consider asking a friend to act as a sitter during sessions.

This month's books, films and games

reviews

The devil is in the detail...

Much of what we call forteana was previously attributed to Old Nick. Broedel hammers out the changes in learned and popular belief, and queries the nature of good and evil.

The Malleus Maleficarum and the construction of witchcraft

Theology and popular belief

Hans Peter Broedel

Manchester University Press, 2003

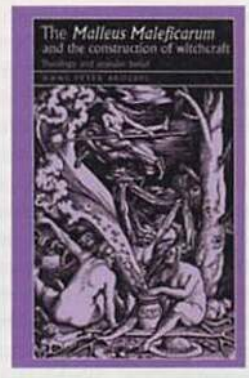
Pb, 209pp, notes, bib, ind, £14.99, ISBN 0 7190 6441 4

This is a difficult book to review, the main reason being that it is (and this is not a criticism) academic *and* theological, and it contributes to the debate on the precise nature of "witchcraft" and why it was, for a time, so heavily persecuted. One should ideally have read everything that has gone before to understand the finer points of the argument.

The debate has been continuously updated over the last 2,000 or so years, not least because the main protagonist, the devil, is central to an understanding of why witchcraft became such a danger to orthodox Christianity (or some Christians anyway) during the late mediæval / early modern period in Central Europe. Broedel has to summarise this background, but does it neither chronologically nor biographically: what St Thomas Aquinas or St Augustine said is scattered all over the place. Due to the synchronic approach, it's difficult to follow the development of Christian thinking on witchcraft in a "straight-line" historical way.

If that isn't bad enough, Broedel's summary of the actual text of Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum* itself (of which he has used the earliest possible editions; the Montague Summers translation is riddled with errors, in part because of the editions he) is perfunctory. I hoped this book would be more forthcoming in its treatment of the text, but Broedel is, I believe, writing for an audience familiar with the MM. So, before reading this book I'd advise reading at least one translation.

This text will play an important role in the ongoing witch/craft debate in that it foregrounds the variety of positions (summarised as secular, popular culture and theological) taken between the 12th and 15th centuries. There is little agreement within these categories – let alone between them – as to what being a witch entailed; whether it was a religion, sect, cult or purely individual practice; how dangerous it was; whether the practices were harmful or just indicators of what witches believed; how far being a witch was gender-specific; and so on.



The thematic approach is probably the only one that can be used, but it can get a little confusing for a lay reader. You'll need to take extensive notes if you want to isolate any particular group's (or individual's) views.

I was perplexed that Broedel treats all demonic beings as equivalent: no 'Lucifer', 'Satan', 'The Devil' in the index, just demons. I may not be well-versed in Christian theology, but I seem to remember that, according to some sources, there was a definite diabolic hierarchy with "The Devil" at the top. Broedel uses, almost without exception, the lower case "devil" as a synonym for demon, so when he talks of witches having contact with the devil, you never know whether what was originally intended was a common-or-garden demon or something more important. But then, all these demons could just have been the devil in disguise anyway: some Christian theologians considered that demons could impersonate pagan gods (who were beyond the pale, obviously).

Earlier theologians had opined that both sexes could be agents of the devil

As for witches, well you paid your money, so to speak... Institoris and Sprenger's main "invention" in the witch debate was to propose that witches were, by definition, female. Earlier theologians and jurists had opined that both sexes could be agents of the devil, or heretics. However, the authors of the MM argued that the form of contact between women and the Devil meant that it was limited to women: they were more gullible, more prone to gossip and less powerful (and therefore more likely to use magic); whereas men doing alchemy or divination weren't doing anyone any harm. The key was that one knew that witches were around when evil deeds were happening (though some illnesses, accidents or deaths were, of course, due to "natural" causes and God moved in mysterious, but ultimately responsible, ways). As witches were responsible for such things, then if evil things were happening, there had to be witches around. And the best way to find out who was a witch was to make her undergo light interrogation (or torture as we would call it now, unless it is happening in Guantanamo Bay) by hanging her from the ceiling by her thumbs or by using any other suitable means of extracting a confession.

This book is well written, and each chapter is followed by notes, which include all the quotes in the original Latin, just so you can check them. A full bibliography should enable those who are minded to go into this debate in much more detail. Overall, it is a worthwhile text for anyone wanting to find out more about the construction of witchcraft.

As you may realise, I have my problems with the text, but they are minor compared to the author's achievement. If nothing else, it should make people realise just how different today's witches are from their counterparts in earlier centuries, how complicated the story of their demonisation is; and how much the definitions of – and responses to – witches varied. Forteans will find the changes in popular and learned belief on the subject fascinating. The details of what events could be attributed to witches or demons would include much that comes under the rubric of "fortean" these days, including ghosts and poltergeists, strange falls of objects from the sky, deformities and unlikely deaths. But there are much deeper questions addressed in the text, such as the nature of 'good' and 'evil', and who ultimately is responsible for what happens in the world (or was thought to be responsible in the mediæval and early modern period.)

Recommended for those with the necessary background or for those willing to read further afterwards.

Richard Alexander

Fortean Times Verdict

FASCINATING, IF FLAWED, LOOK AT THE DEVIL AND HIS WORKS **7**

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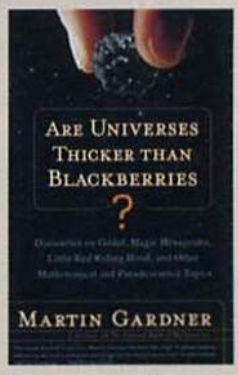
Debunker mentality...

The old skeptic elegantly bridges the science–culture divide and bestows bouquets and brickbats on his heroes and zeroes



Are Universes Thicker than Blackberries?

Discourses on Gödel, magic hexagrams, Little Red Riding Hood and other mathematical and pseudoscience topics

Martin Gardner

WW Norton & Co, 2003
Hb, 352pp, refs, ind, $25.95/Can $39.00, ISBN 0393057429

Martin Gardner is approaching 90, and the old warhorse is still going. *Are Universes Thicker Than Blackberries?* includes essays on all Gardner's preoccupations: science, maths, religion, literature and the debunking of pseudoscience in all its forms.

Gardner is a wonderfully lucid explainer of mathematical ideas, and the chapters on Gödel's Undecidability Theorem, Game Theory and Mobius Bands are models of clarity. He has a keen interest in the philosophy of science, and his articles on Rudolf Carnap and Karl Popper reflect this.

Gardner's section on 'Religion' is a mixed bag. The first essay challenges the scholar and author Gary Wills (who has been so critical of the Church in recent times that Gardner wonders if he is, in any meaningful sense, a Catholic) to state his belief or disbelief in a series of Catholic tenets. Gardner also discusses the occasional emergence of Messiah figures in Judaism, and the hilariously vague mystical pronouncements of Krishnamurti.

'Moonshine' deals with the various forms of pseudoscience which Gardner attacks. Dr Bruno Bettelheim's approach to autism is particularly disturbing. Bettelheim belonged to the Freudian school of thought that saw autism as, bluntly, the mother's fault. There is no evidence for this contention, which obviously caused much distress to the mothers in question. Gardner is equally scathing about "facilitated communication", a technique involving an autistic child holding the hand of a care worker who holds a pen to allow the child to communicate their deepest thoughts. Gardner documents the FC community's resistance to any systematic testing to disprove the obvious suspicion that the hand holding the pen – that is, the care worker's – is doing the communicating.

The last four essays are articles Gardner wrote for Gordon Stein's *Encyclopædia of the Paranormal*. The first two deal with Eyeless Vision and Magic and 'Psi'. In recent years, Gardner has spent more and more time on magic. He writes that psychic research without a magician's involvement is useless: "As any magician will tell you, scientists are the easiest of all people to fool." He rounds up with a couple of essays debunking 'classic' spiritualists, the Americans Mrs Piper and 'Dr' Henry Slade. I hope that this is not Gardner's last book; nevertheless, given his age, it is a possibility, and one suspects that he wanted to end with dissections of these old frauds.

The section on literature sums up Gardner's catholic (definitely with a small c) interests – an enthusiast's writings on GK Chesterton and Edgar Wallace's *The Green Archer* sits with an article on Hemingway ostensibly about his relationship with Jane Kellman, who would later become a spiritualist, but really – as Gardner admits – a demolition job on Hemingway. The essay on Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* displays one of Gardner's most endearing traits – describing himself as a "philosophical theist", he can discuss Chesterton's vision of evil as "the back of Nature" with its Christian overtones without condescension or scorn. Unlike some "sceptical" authors, he is not contemptuous of religion or mysticism *per se*; more the deliberately fraudulent claims of spiritualists, or the brutal Freudianism of the likes of Bettelheim.

Gardner has a deceptively bare, laconic style reminiscent of Borges on occasion. Occasionally the sub-editing lets him down. Many of the pieces are derived from pieces in *Skeptical Inquirer* and occasionally one wishes Gardner had extended them, particularly his dismissal of David Deutsch and Bryce de Witt's "realist" view of the Many Worlds Hypothesis – put simply, the belief that the infinite number of universes posited in the Hypothesis are not theoretical entities but actual realities.

Much lip service is paid to CP Snow's dictum that the 20th century chasm between the "two cultures" of science and the humanities needs to be bridged. Martin Gardner is the rare writer equally at home in both worlds.

Seamus Sweeney

Fortean Times Verdict
A DECENT COMPILATION OF A SKEPTICAL INQUIRER'S IDEAS **8**

Stukeley Illustrated

William Stukeley's rediscovery of Britain's ancient sites

Neil Mortimer

Green Magic Press, 2003
Pb, 140pp, illus, bib, ind, £9.99, ISBN 0954296338

Neil Mortimer is the respected former editor of *3rd Stone*, one of the last of the 'mystical antiquarian' magazines and now sadly defunct. In this book he introduces the man who started it all.

William Stukeley (1687–1765) was a country doctor from Lincolnshire who became inspired with a great vision. He saw the ideal Britain ruled by a dedicated priesthood, wise, learned, pious, bringing to this country the benefits associated with the Holy Grail – and he located it in the time of the Druids. In ancient Albion, he perceived, was the source of all true religion. Every nation, including the Jews, derived their sacred traditions from the Druids. Stukeley believed that here in Britain could be the reconciliation of all peoples, that is, God's Kingdom on Earth. To help bring that about, he became a Church of England clergyman.

The main plank of Stukeley's faith was Stonehenge and the other sacred monuments of Britain. These, he saw, were temples of the noble Druids. To explore and preserve them he formed an antiquarian society, the Roman Knights. Its tone was high bohemian. Members included scholars, aristocrats, spirited youths and learned or pretty women. Stukeley was their Chief Druid. He promoted among his fellows a Druid revival that has lasted up to the present. And he introduced good humour into archæology.

Stukeley's great admirer was William Blake. Orthodox scholars disapproved of his enthusiasms – and have done so ever since – but Blake took on his whole vision of Albion and made it into our mystical, national prophecy.

Modern archæologists ignore or deride Stukeley's highest achievement, his mystical perceptions of prehistory, but everyone admires him as an artist. Before the camera came in, topographical artists would walk across the country, quickly recording everything of interest on the way. Stukeley made on-the-spot drawings of Avebury just at the

moment when the stones were being destroyed. His engravers, Gerard Vandergucht and other Roman Knights, filled in the details, and that is how we have those wonderful plates of Avebury, Stonehenge and antiquities throughout Britain, many of which are reproduced in Neil Mortimer's book.

As a mystical nationalist, druidical clergyman, astro-archæologist and antiquarian heresiarch, Stukeley is never likely to become fashionable. Two previous books on him, by Piggot and Haycock, shy away from his philosophy. His appeal is to poets, artists and romantics rather than to the literal-minded products of archæology courses. Neil Mortimer has captured the spirit and essence of Stukeley better than anyone before him.

John Michell

Fortean Times Verdict
ENCAPSULATES THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND'S MYSTICAL CLERIC **8**

Cannibal Isles

Time Travelling in the Andaman Islands

David Tomory

nthposition, 2003

Pb, 179pp, map, bib, ind, £14.95, ISBN 095462680X

In Victorian Britain, the Andaman Islands were a remote outpost in the Indian Ocean best known for their savage and primitive tribespeople, Conan Doyle's source for the fiendish blowpipe-wielding pygmy pursued by Sherlock Holmes in *The Sign of Four*. In India itself, at the same time, the islands were becoming the most hated and feared penal colony in the British Empire, where hundreds of all-male convicts were sequestered in solitary cells in order to prevent 'gross immorality'. Today, the Andamans are being haphazardly developed for tourism within a sinister atmosphere of military secrecy, and their few remaining indigenous people are either being protected or, as David Tomory suspects, 'rehabilitated to death' as the sawmills and logging industry rip through their primeval rain forest.

Cannibal Isles weaves this story through Tomory's pungent account of his own travels round the Andamans in 30 days, the maximum allowed by the inscrutable forces of Indian bureaucracy. It's an exemplary historical travelogue, witty, earthy and entertaining, wearing its impressive research lightly and threading it fluently through a personal journey in which flashes of the serendipitous and the surreal illuminate an all-too-recognisable backdrop of frustration, discomfort and boredom. It's strong on the early history of piracy and slavery; it gets to the bottom of the official mystification about the tribes, their traditional way of life and their alleged cannibal habits; and it unpicks the story of how the imperial British created, almost by accident, a pestilential hellhole beyond compare. Tomory has a fine eye for fortean detail, and for the ways in which it emerges from the Andamans' collision of the mundane, the grotesque and the wonderful.

Mike Jay

Fortean Times Verdict
STRANGE TALES, BEAUTIFULLY TOLD **8**

Essential Militaria

Nicholas Hobbes

Atlantic Books, 2003

HB, 160pp, £9.99, ISBN 1 84354 229 3

Hobbes' pocket-sized collection of military facts and curiosities about death tolls, rates of fire and top fighter aces is leavened by a healthy dose of strangeness: daft reasons for going to war (cakes, pigs, football); 'delicacies' eaten during the 1870 Siege of Paris (kittens in onion ragout anyone?); the seven past lives of General George S Patton (beginning with 'prehistoric mammoth hunter'!); and winners of the Dickin Medal for Animal Gallantry (Rob the 'Paradog', GI Joe the carrier pigeon). While useless as a reference work, the book's lucky dip structure means that one often stumbles on such unexpected nuggets as 'Items in US Military audit 2000/2001', which includes $4,600 spent on white beach sand and $19,000 on 'decorative river rock' for a base in the Arabian desert.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
AN ENJOYABLE MISCELLANY OF MARTIAL FACTS AND FIGURES **7**

Mind as metaphor

A philosophical model in which fortean phenomena make sense fails to convince

Maya

The world as virtual reality

Richard L Thompson

Govardhan Hill Pub, 2003

Pb, 304 pp, $15.95, ISBN0963530909

"Things are not as they seem," this book's cover declares. Material reality is an illusion in Hinduism, *maya* being the Sanskrit word for the veil of illusion. This Hindu belief is ultimately what this book is arguing for, through a philosophical investigation of physics, computing, consciousness, and the paranormal.

Thompson adopts the metaphor of Virtual Reality computing: "the brain has no location within the virtual space created by the VR computer, but it is nonetheless able to interact with a virtual body that has a position in that space." He hypothesises that physical reality could be similar – a virtual world being run from a "Ground Reality", of which our consciousness forms a part. Consciousness then has to be separate from this physical reality.

This is the territory of *The Matrix*, the kind of idea that has deep philosophical roots in our culture. Thompson is correct in comparing the Hindu maya to the mind-body split of Cartesian dualism, because Indian and Western philosophies are conceptually related. A mind-body dichotomy was common to Greek philosophy, Hinduism and Buddhism, but noticeably absent in, for example, ancient Chinese philosophy. Classical Chinese had no separate word for mind. Even in pre-philosophical Greek, there were no words referring to mental activity, until the Greek philosophers conceptualised a metaphorical 'space' where thoughts took place.

The 'mind' began life as a metaphor, but applying this metaphor led to many philosophical problems, such as how to understand what is 'real' when the mind has to rely on the 'physical' senses, and the 'physical' world constantly changes. The 'reality' of a thing relied on it having a constant identity. The requirement for objective 'reality' to be something beyond mere appearances shares an underlying conceptual framework with the idea that the physical world is an illusion, and mystic notions of a 'true reality'.

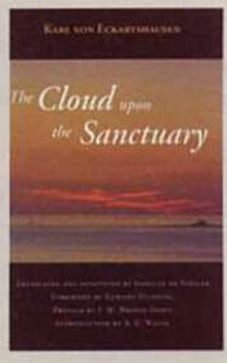
Thompson embraces the mind-body split, and his hypothesis rests on the separation of consciousness from the physical world. Although I have some problems believing that, I suspend disbelief to read how this Universe of ours could all be virtual. This book is at its most interesting when it describes how the physics of our Universe could be run from the Ground Reality. After that point, Thompson goes over the "edge of orthodoxy" into the world of the paranormal. A fortean procession of the damned – psychokinesis, visions, hallucinations, visitations, near death experiences, poltergeists, apports, healing, and so on – is used as evidence for the extra-physical nature of consciousness, as it interacts with the virtual program. Thompson has come up with a philosophical model in which paranormal phenomena make some kind of sense. However, as *FT* readers know, evidence is needed for these phenomena, before they are used as evidence for something else. Things may not be "as they seem," but I am not convinced this is a sign of mystic consciousness, generated from beyond the veil of illusion.

Barry Kavanagh

Fortean Times Verdict
STIMULATING BUT ULTIMATELY UNCONVINCING **6**

The hidden brotherhood

The extraordinary – and now almost unknown – Eckharthausen signposts the spiritual elect's path from the mundane to the mystical



The Cloud upon the Sanctuary

Karl von Eckharthausen

Ibis Press, 2003
Hb, 137pp, $16.95, ISBN 0892540842

Karl von Eckharthausen is little read today. Aside from students of European mysticism and Christian theosophy, the group among whom he receives some passing interest are the readers of Aleister Crowley. It was Eckharthausen's book *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary* which set Crowley off on his colourful career. Crowley came across the notion of a hidden community of spiritual adepts in AE Waite's *Book of Black Magic and Pacts*. He asked Waite for more information. Waite suggested reading Eckharthausen. Crowley did. In his *Confessions*, the Great Beast remarks that: "*The Cloud upon the Sanctuary* told me of a secret community of saints in possession of every spiritual grace, of the keys to the treasure of nature, and of moral emancipation such that there was no intolerance or unkindness – their one passion was to bring mankind into the sphere of their own sublimity – I was absorbed in *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary*, reading it again and again, without being put off by the pharisaical, priggish and pithecanthropoid notes of its translator..."

What attracted Crowley was the idea of a secret, hidden Church, devoted to the noble cause of truth. It appealed to his taste for mysteries and his elitism, one shared by many occultists. Mme Blavatsky spoke of the Hidden Masters, secure in their Himalayan stronghold, steering man in his spiritual evolution. Ever since the Rosicrucians, the notion of a hidden brotherhood, devoted to mankind's spiritual growth, has been a theme of occultist thought. In the secret society ridden 18th century, Eckharthausen hit a responsive nerve. Whether such a brotherhood really existed was unimportant: people interested in its existence acted as if it did.

Eckharthausen's brotherhood, however, differed from the Rosicrucians in one respect. Where the authors of the *Fama Fraternitas* and other Rosicrucian tracts spoke of their brotherhood as made up of definite members, Eckharthausen makes clear that his hidden Church is not some inner circle of, say, the exterior Catholic Church, or some society like the Freemasons. It is much more a community of like-minded souls, an idea found in Swedenborg and in 20th century occultists like PD Ouspensky, who, in his spiritual travels, came upon a variety of individuals bearing the marks of a dawning 'cosmic consciousness'. For Eckharthausen, this shift in consciousness from the mundane to the mystical is the aim of his spiritual elect, and the sign of membership within it.

Karl von Eckharthausen was born on 28 June 1752 in Bavaria. An illegitimate child, he lost his mother at birth. His father, the count, treated him well, and gave him a fine education. His double loss of mother and legitimacy, however, instilled in Karl a lingering melancholy, and early on he developed a retiring attitude to the world, and a profound sense of detachment from it.

Eckharthausen studied at Munich, then went to Ingoldstadt, the base for Adam Weishaupt's Masonic splinter group, the Illuminati. One wonders if Eckharthausen came into contact with Weishaupt. The Illuminati were a kind of secret society behind the secret societies, and it is not too far-fetched to see in Eckharthausen's hidden Church a more spiritual version of Weishaupt's invisible brotherhood. Eckharthausen's concerns were more religious than political, and although he speaks of a "theocratic republic", Weishaupt's Enlightenment rationalism would more than likely have repelled Eckharthausen.

In 1780 Eckharthausen became censor at the Library of Munich, then in 1784, Keeper of the Archives of the Electoral House. Few of his 69 books are read today, but his influence on the mystical currents of his time was considerable. Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, 'the unknown philosopher', remarked that he was more interested in Eckharthausen than he could express; and their mutual correspondent, Baron Kirchberger, spoke of him as "a man of immense reading and wonderful fertility – an extraordinary personage." It was to Kirchberger's great regret that a proposed meeting at the Swiss frontier had to be called off on account of Eckharthausen's health. At their meeting Kirchberger hoped to receive a communication of the Lost Word from Eckharthausen, who, we assume, had found it. Any information on what may have passed between them is, like the word itself, lost. Amiable, charitable, highly cultured and devout, Eckharthausen died, after a painful illness, on 13 May 1813.
It's a credit to Ibis Press that they've made this spiritual and esoteric classic once again available to a new generation of devotees.

Gary Lachman

Fortean Times Verdict
AN ESOTERIC CLASSIC MAKES A WELCOME RETURN **8**

The Phaselock Code

Through time, death and reality, the metaphysical adventures of the man who fell off Everest

Roger Hart

Paraview Pocket Books, 2003
Pb, 356pp, $14, ISBN 0743477251

Any work combining the more speculative areas of science with spirituality risks crossing that line between, on the one side, being a genuinely sincere and progressive synthesis of differing philosophies and worldviews; and on the other, being *The Celestine Prophecy*. It's to Roger Hart's credit that despite such a remit, and a truly off-putting title, he just about manages to pull it off.

Hart is a geophysicist and adventurer with an impressive CV – writer, explorer, research professor, and, at the age of 21, member of the first US attempt to scale Mount Everest. It's with this moderately botched expedition that Hart's autobiographical tale begins, when a lapse of climbing protocol sends him hurtling off an ice cliff and into some form of out-of-body experience which sparks a lifelong interest in the true nature of reality and consciousness.

Other significant and spooky events follow as Hart lives through the '60s and '70s – during another cock-up-prone expedition to Tierra del Fuego; at a showing of *If...* in New York; at the Woodstock music festival; and in a hash-addled car accident in Morocco. Add in plenty of meaningful dialogues with sundry wise men and particle physicists, infuse with a plethora of fortean events and synchronicities, including a fleeting appearance by a yeti, and you get a heady though not groundbreaking brew of pulp metaphysics.

Hart's conclusion, in a nutshell, is that the underlying reality of the Universe (or rather, branching multiverse) is a field of hidden information mediated by waves of quantum potential. What we interpret as everyday reality is made up of a network of such quantum waves which have become phaselocked and act as a single entity, as a collection of photons

become phaselocked in a laser. And such a phaselocked system can be affected as a whole by the human brain acting on one small part of it through an act of dissociated concentration.

The Phaselock Code is a much more enjoyable read than I was expecting. Hart writes elegantly and honestly for the most part, although his dialogue is often alarmingly clunky when the emphasis is on exposition rather than human interaction. More worryingly, the science is occasionally confused or vague – the brief account of Cepheid variables is particularly poor. It also falls rather too often into the trap of silly extended metaphors based on quantum physics – calling on the dual nature of matter as both wave and particle as an argument for the separation of mind and body just doesn't convince, I'm afraid. But on the whole, it's a stimulating and entertaining read, as much a tale of boy's own adventure as meta-physical speculation – ripping holiday reading for the fortean traveller.

Tim Chapman

Fortean Times Verdict
PULP METAPHYSICS, PARTICLE PHYSICS AND A RIPPING TALE **8**

The Lost Treasure of King John

Richard Waters

Barny Books (Hough on the Hill, Grantham, Lincs, tel: 01400 250246), 2003
Pb, 70pp, illus, bib, notes, £6.00, ISBN 0 903172373

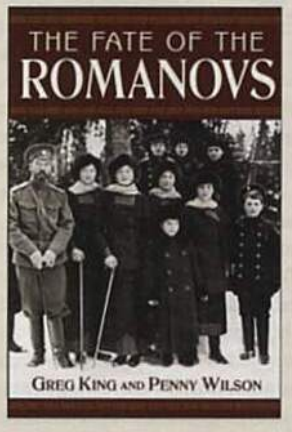
On 12 October 1216, King John lost his treasure while crossing the Wash, and died shortly afterwards. This booklet rescues the event from its over-familiar *1066 And All That* resting place and poses some interesting questions. Waters examines contemporary chronicles, tries to establish where the events took place, and suggests that King John's death might not have been an accident. And the Knights Templar make an appearance.

William Darragh

Fortean Times Verdict
INTERESTING REAPPRAISAL OF A MEDIÆVAL MYSTERY **5**

Tales from the crypt

Who killed the royal family? Alternative scenarios – and some conspiracy theories – about the story that refuses to die



The Fate of the Romanovs

Greg King and Penny Wilson

John Wiley & Sons, 2003
Hb, 657pp, illus, appx, notes, bib, ind, £19.99, ISBN 0471207683

In 1918, the Romanovs – the family of Nicholas II, the last emperor of Russia – were imprisoned, abused and humiliated. Then, on orders from Lenin, they were executed, their bodies were taken into the woods and burnt to ashes – apart from, possibly, Anastasia. So the story went...

Never have the lives and deaths of a group of people so needed an objective historical post-mortem. With so many layers of myth, propaganda and glamour built up round the bodies of the Romanovs, an objective reappraisal of the evidence takes special skill. The autopsy carried out by Greg King and Penny Wilson is complete, for now, and it makes for fascinating reading.

King and Wilson set out to examine the last 78 days of the Romanovs' imprisonment in the Siberian city of Ekaterinburg, the Romanovs' murder in July 1918 and the controversies following their official 1991 exhumation. They examined countless documents, many of which were previously unpublished.

The book begins with portraits of the central characters and sketches the crises enveloping Russia. Here is where the subtle dissection of the myths begins. The authors' portraits of the main protagonists often stand in stark contrast to accepted wisdom.

The real meat of the book focuses on the family's captivity in Ekaterinburg, where Nicholas, his wife Alexandra, their five children (Olga, Tatiana, Marie, Anastasia and the sickly Alexei) and a number of retainers spent the last weeks of their lives.

The reconstruction of this period – and, indeed, the material for all the book – is drawn from available sources. In areas where hard and fast evidence is scarce, the authors highlight what is pure conjecture and their own concerns. It is to King and Wilson's credit that their narrative never feels hampered by its reliance on sources and moves through the complex layers of incident and characters seamlessly and clearly. The entire story is told with the dynamism of experienced narrators.

It is also within the confines of their final prison that many of the legends shrouding the family built up. It has always been in the interests of anti-Communists to paint a picture of the brutality and abuse meted out to the Romanovs by their Bolshevik captors. What King and Wilson provide is a starkly contrasting picture. The authors reveal the prosaic often inherent in truth rather than the glamour of propaganda and myth. In doing so they bring the human story to the fore, and though the subject matter is often unavoidably banal, the writing is never so. Petty, humorous, absurd, everyday experiences are recounted along with graver incidents. Notable among these are the alleged encounter between Marie and a guard which had a strong impact on the family, and the betrayal of the Romanovs by once-trusted members of the Imperial court. These incidents help to redefine the experiences of the Romanovs.

One of the book's most controversial departures is on the point of who ordered the family's execution. It is generally thought that if not Lenin, then certainly Moscow, was responsible. Wilson and King argue an alternative scenario.

For the fortean, the final fifth of the book may well prove to be the most fascinating.

In 1991 the bodies were officially exhumed. Various interested parties attempted to place their point of view at the forefront of history, and the authors paint a vivid picture of this deplorable wrangling over the 'truth' of everything from the remains to the Romanovs' possible eventual canonisation.

Fortean areas of interest such as the miracles credited to Nicholas II, various conspiracy theories and, of course, the continuing speculation about Anastasia, are all covered here. (Only one page out of over 500 is given over to Anastasia, with some justification.)

With a well-detailed bibliography and appendices as well as copious notes, *The Fate of the Romanovs* is an erudite retelling of a story that refuses to die. King and Wilson's work will be a landmark, though certainly not the last word on this subject.

The door to the Romanovs' crypt will never be fully closed and it is only a matter of time before others, from surgeons to grave-robbers, come along to poke around their bones.

Simon Price

Fortean Times Verdict
A DEMYTHOLOGISING READING OF THE TSAR SIGNS **9**

Tales of terror

A coffin-shaped compendium of horror

The Amicus Collection

DVD Anchor Bay, £39.99

Amicus, the company formed by Americans Milton Subotsky and Max Rosenberg to take advantage of British tax breaks for US film makers, has often been seen as the poor relation of Hammer, but such an assessment is more than a little unfair. Amicus may have been an opportunistic enterprise but it did produce some distinctive British horror movies that owed less to Hammer – despite the borrowing of stars and directors – and more to Ealing's classic *Dead of Night*. Resurrecting Ealing's conception of the portmanteau horror – in which a number of people each have a tale of terror to relate – was a stroke of genius. Beginning in 1965 with *Dr Terror's House of Horrors*, Amicus produced seven such compendia, all featuring a wonderful array of British talent – from Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee to Terry-Thomas and Diana Dors – as well as numerous more conventional chillers. Ultimately, while hardly the stuff of nightmares for our somewhat over-sophisticated contemporary palates, they remain as strangely comforting as ghost stories told in front of a roaring fire.

This 5-disc set rounds up five Amicus gems ranging from the studio's first stab (sorry) at the genre with *Dr Terror* to 1974's fascinatingly misguided blaxploitation-meets-Agatha Christie werewolf pic *The Beast Must Die*. In between, we get the splendid, Robert Bloch scripted *The House That Dripped Blood* (1971), the period gothic *And Now the Screaming Starts* (1972) and, perhaps Amicus's most inventive take on the portmanteau formula, *Asylum*, boasting a cast that features Patrick Magee, Robert Powell, Charlotte Rampling, Richard Todd and Sylvia Syms. The film's central plot device is also the best idea for a job interview in cinema history.

A complete set of the portmanteau films would have been the dream ticket, but this is still a lovely collection (with good extras) for aficionados of British screen horror.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
NOT THE BEST OF AMICUS – BUT WELCOME ANYWAY **8**

COMPETITIONS SEE PAGE 57
WIN COPIES OF THE AMICUS COLLECTION AND WORLD WAR 1 IN COLOUR

The Tin Drum

Dir Volker Schlondorff, 1979
DVD Nouveaux Pictures, £15.99

Gunter Grass's 1959 novel was something of a *succes de scandale* with its bitterly humorous portrait of an increasingly corrupt and Nazified Europe initially on the edge of, and then toppling into, the abyss of the Second World War. Its most memorable element, of course, was its narrator: Oskar, the boy who decides to stop growing at the age of three, inseparable from his tin drum and able to shatter glass with his terrifying screams.

Volker Schlondorff's adaptation ditched large chunks of the sprawling book, but ended up creating a much tighter and more focused narrative for cinema audiences. By narrowing the scope of the story, Schlondorff offers us a fable in which Oskar's life and the rise and fall of the Nazis run in tandem and give the film an easily apprehended structure that helps guide us through its distinctly odd events.

Much of the picaresque quality of the book is sacrificed as a result of this focus, but as a magical realist *bildungsroman* it works remarkably well. Its evocation of the everyday life of pre-war Danzig is rich in memorable characters and surreal juxtapositions and the cinematography, often self-consciously harking back to the earliest days of silent film, is remarkable. The performances are all excellent, but David Bennent, as the simultaneously spooky and sympathetic Peter Pan *manqué*, is particularly affecting.

Edith Mason

Fortean Times Verdict
A MAGIC-REALIST JOURNEY THROUGH A TROUBLED PAST **9**

The Adventures of Tintin Boxed Set

DVD Anchor Bay £24.99

A must buy for younger forteans, the complete animated adaptations of Hergé's classic comic strips brings together the young reporter's adventures in one bumper package (well, they're pretty much all here, except for the early and politically unreconstructable *Tintin au Congo*). From shooting stars and lost treasures to sinister cults and solar eclipses, there's enough forteana here to keep big people happy too. If, like me, you can't bear to hear our hero speaking with an American accent, you can change the DVDs' language settings, trade Snowy for Milou, and brush up your French.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
GREAT ENTERTAINMENT FOR FORTEANS YOUNG AND OLD **8**

World War 1 in Colour

DVD Fremantle Home Entertainment i, £19.99

There have been many reassessments of the Great War lately, from revisionist histories to popular TV programmes. This recently screened series is perhaps the oddest of the lot, given that it aims not at a military or political re-evaluation of WW1 but instead a re-presentation of the conflict in purely visual terms. After the success of programmes like *World War Two in Colour*, it's a logical idea, the only snag being that colour film, rather than merely being extremely rare – as it was in Britain during WW2 – was non-existent in the years 1914-18, a technology that hadn't yet been born.

So, this is a strangely quixotic undertaking, but given the re-enactment and restaging that took place to create much of the original footage from the era, not necessarily a dishonest one. The programme wants us literally to *see* the events anew, not in the familiar black and white of old newsreel but in the brown of earth, the khaki of uniforms and the vivid red of blood and poppy fields. And quite often it works – the shattered moonscape of the Somme has a new power to shock when rescued from the familiarity of monochrome and the long-suffering faces of the Tommies at Ypres become, equally shockingly, fully human once again.

It's a trick, I suppose, but strangely enough, and despite the lack of any equivalent new insight in Kenneth Branagh's narration, rather a poetic one that can probably only help to reconnect (especially younger) viewers to history.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
WAR IS HELL — SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL WATCH IT IN COLOUR **8**

Hidden & Dangerous 2

PC £29.99, Take Two/Gathering/Illusion Softworks

H&D2 is that rare thing, a long-awaited sequel that doesn't disappoint. In fact this historically detailed, hugely challenging and nail-bitingly exciting WWII shooter gets my vote for best game of 2003.

The original H&D was, despite being infamously bug-ridden, an instant classic, delivering what was then the most satisfying tactical shooter yet seen, with a wonderful variety of settings and missions on offer, a brilliant use of the four-man squad concept and some genuine tactical challenges wrapped up in the context of an action game.

The sequel sticks to the same basic concept but improves on it in virtually all areas. You can switch from 3rd to 1st person view as and when you want and issue a far more complex series of orders than last time around. You can also switch at will to a tactical map view, pausing the game or continuing to play in real time as the fancy takes you. It's a wonderfully flexible sysytem, and encourages you to tackle the open-ended missions in a variety of ways.

Some may argue that the game is too difficult; it's undeniably tough, but at least plays fair throughout. You'll probably only succeed by planning ahead and using your sometimes limited resources in the most effective way, and if one of your chaps takes a sniper's bullet to the head it will be because you haven't done a proper recce.

Your crack SAS team are good, but they're not immortal: I was deeply saddened when Sgt Jones got the chop after fighting through the Norwegian campaign and halfway across North Africa. For one thing, it meant he never had the satisfaction of helping sink the Tirpitz.

If you want to try the brilliant (de-bugged) original before forking out, then Gathering are very generously giving it away as a free download at: http://www.gathering.com/hd2/hddeluxe.html

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
PURE JOY: PROBABLY THE BEST GAME OF 2003 **9**

UFO: Aftermath

PC £29.99, Cenega/Altar

An enjoyable throwback to the days of the *XCOM* games, *UFO: Aftermath* pits the survivors of a global catastrophe – a rain of alien spores has killed most people off and caused the remainder to mutate into shambling horrors – against a major extraterrestrial threat. It's a fascinating mix of elements, involving carrying out research and development (often reverse engineering the aliens' own technology to use against them), husbanding resources, planning military strategy and outfitting your squads.

All of this is done using a global map – this is your strategic overview of the worldwide conflict, providing you with the information on which to base some big decisions. When you actually send your squad into battle, though, the emphasis shifts from this strategic persepective to a distinctly tactical one as you move to street level, fighting it out with a variety of bug eyed monsters and classic greys.

RPG elements are also crucial to success – it's vital to select and equip your team members with care and pay attention to developing their skills if you want to hone them into a fearsome anti-alien unit – and even then you may find that your enemies have unleashed a new menace which is irritatingly invulnerable to your latest weapons. In such cases, it's back to the old drawing board for another round of R&D.

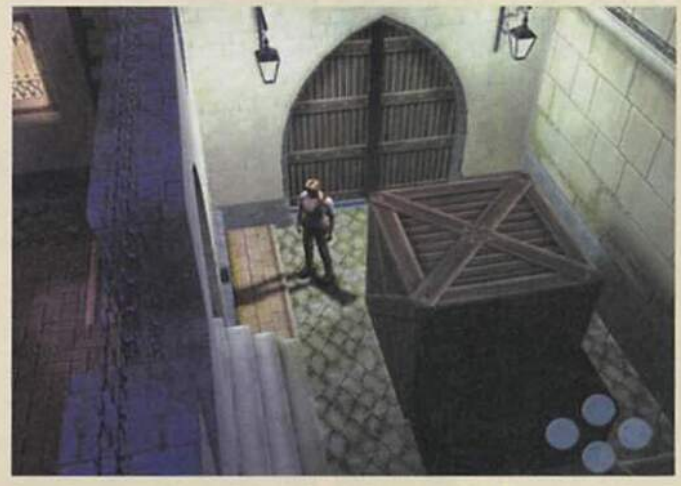
While it balances its various elements with aplomb, and presents plenty of genuinely interesting challenges, *UFO: Aftermath* perhaps suffers at times from its measured pace. The mixture of turn-based combat and real time fighting (reminiscent of the system used in the *Fall Out* series) provides plenty of tactical flexibility and the opportunity to modify plans, but while old *XCOM* veterans will enjoy it immensely, newer gamers may find it a bit too laborious.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict
SATISFYING, IF SLOW, ALIEN-SMASHING STRATEGY TITLE **7**

Sleep no more

The snoozing adventure game awakens



Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon

PC £29.99, PS2 £34.99, Xb £39.99,THQ/Revolution

Impending geological disasters; apocalyptic codes hidden inside ancient Mayan artifacts; skulduggery involving Neo-Templars; the myth-shrouded presence of Glastonbury Tor; revelations hidden inside the mysterious Voynich Manuscript; and, last but not least, visionary dragon symbolism brought on by the fondling of a pair of dirty underpants. Yes, it's the 3D update of a well loved 90s point-and-click classic – fans of the *Broken Sword* series will rejoice.

Although the point-and-click has gone (WASD and the cursor keys are all you will need) it has the same quirky dialogue and amusing characters to help piece together the clues. There are plenty of in-jokes too, relating to the game's previous incarnations, but you needn't be a card-carrying *Broken Sword* anorak to take part.

Once again, American patent lawyer George Stobbart and chic Parisienne journalist Nico Collard are drawn into an evil conspiracy, and you are likely to get drawn in, too. Expect no missile-blasting carnage and you won't be disappointed. Nico does get a chance to show her pneumatic credentials though, at one point sporting a Lara-like get-up complete with hotpants while romping through the landscape.

The game has a quaint, retro feel to it behind the polished 3D graphics and the loving care the designers have taken with facial nuances and voice acting. The key to why it works is that it never takes itself too seriously and the excellent script gives George and Nico a greater depth than most games deliver.

For all its witty exchanges and false trails, the game is basically linear but does need lateral thinking. An atmospheric soundtrack and evocative sound effects to grace the attractively rendered graphics all add to the immersive experience of a refreshingly bug- and glitch-free game.

Although the genre has never really gone away, *Broken Sword: Sleeping Dragon* provides a welcome high-profile revival of the adventure game. So, lounge back in that dodgy swivel chair as George and Nico bicker away and you scratch your head over the latest unsolved puzzle as the world faces annihilation once again.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict
ATMOSPHERIC AND IMMERSIVE: GREAT FUN **8**

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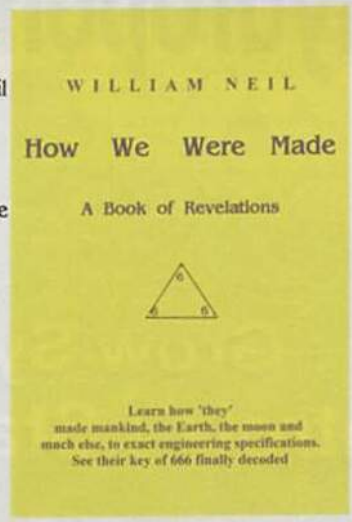
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letters

Seeing things in Pookchurch wood

Regarding the photograph of a possible fairy sent by Tracey Boddy (inset – see **FT174:72**), Tracey was kind enough to send me a copy of the photo as I had a page on fairy folklore in Sussex (http://www.homeusers.prestel.co.uk/aspen/sussex/fairies/html). I was very interested, especially as the photo had been taken on the edge of a small woodland called 'Pookchurch Wood', pook coming from the Old English 'Puca', meaning goblin. I went to investigate and found that there is a bit of an optical illusion in the published photo, as there is actually a stream valley in between, which you cannot readily see.

To demonstrate, my nearest and dearest took a photograph of myself in roughly the same spot. It is a different season, so there is more undergrowth, but the chopped wood in the original photograph is actually at my feet, as is a small footpath. I'm not particularly tall (5ft 9in/1.75m) but I'm not the pixie that the photograph suggests.

The interesting part of all this for me was the place name. Whilst I can't find any earlier reference to the name than the first edition Ordnance Survey maps, there is a structure near to where the photo was taken which may explain the name. Further along the valley to the east is a sandstone outcropping on the edge of Pookchurch Wood. One particularly large rock, separate from the rest, has a small natural entrance at the base (below). My theory is that the locals saw this massive stone structure with an entrance only big enough for the little people and thought "That must be where them fairies go to pray", hence the name.

David Staveley
Eastbourne, East Sussex

Flesh from Earth

The Mishna, the primary account of Jewish oral law dating from about AD 200, mentions "a mouse that is half flesh and half earth. If one touches the flesh he is impure, if the earth, he is pure" (Chullin 9:6). These strange mice are also mentioned in Ælian's *De natura animalium*, written at roughly the same time [see **FT113:50**]. Maimonides (1135-1204), the famous Jewish philosopher and doctor, comments that the idea of a mouse starting off partly made of earth and over time becoming all flesh is well known and many reported seeing it, even though "it is astonishing and has no reasonable explanation".

Zvi Ron
Richmond, Virginia

Primate encounter

While reading *War Stories of the Green Berets* by Hans Halberstadt (Motorbooks International, 1994, p.27.), I came across the following account of a confrontation during the Vietnam War. A number of strange animals have been found in Indochina in recent years and it makes me wonder if these guys really bumped into what they think they did or if it was some kind of primitive ape man. They don't really sound like gibbons.

"In 1967, the following event occurred in Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. A mixed group of American Special Forces and South Vietnamese soldiers led by an NCO named Dennis Mack were operating behind North Vietnamese Army lines when they encountered what they called 'A Gibbon Ape'. Earlier, they had found a spot where a group of North Vietnamese soldiers had recently camped and decided to stake it out to see if they would return. At about noon the day after they got there, they heard noise in the jungle.

"'As the sound got closer, I could start to see the brush moving – and out came these apes! They had white faces, and they were walking along in patrol file! They kept moving toward us, and finally they got quite close. I told the interpreter to tell the guys, don't fire. Then one of the apes saw us. It held its hand up, just like the hand and arm signals we use on patrol. They all stopped and looked at us. One picked up a stick and started to act threatening with it. It moved closer, and the interpreter tried to push it away. The ape swung at the interpreter and hit him in the face with a kind of slapping punch that made his nose start bleeding. Then the rest of them started throwing things at us, so we opened up on them, and they finally took off. I was really impressed. These monkeys were using good patrolling techniques.'"

Chris Newport
By email

Wild life appeal

Do you know of wild events, weird parties, way-out places or wacky people? From weddings to divorces, pensioners to pranks, winners to gamblers, clergy to collectors, *Britain's Wildest* (a new series for Sky TV by September Films) will cover them all, current and retrospective. Contact Charlotte, Ian or Andy on 020 8563 9393 or email wilduk@septemberfilms.com.

September Films
London

Foxy flea removals

How does a fox rid itself of fleas? According to country lore, it holds a lump of fur or wool in its mouth, goes to a body of water and slowly backs in. To avoid drowning, the fleas scramble to the front end, but as the fox goes under water, they all end up crowded on the lump of fur. The fox then lets go of the fur at the same time as ducking under the water and getting away, leaving the fleas to drift away to their doom (cf. The raft of the Medusa.) Does anyone know whether this has actually been observed?

Mike Meakin
Harewood, West Yorkshire

Haunted mouse?

I recently started working at Reading University's Personnel Office and consequently spend a good deal of time working on a computer with a mouse control. On a number of occasions, the arrow, which normally moves around the monitor screen when the mouse is handled, has mysteriously started working its way around the screen without any help from me. Indeed I have sat without touching the mouse, watching the arrow moving, with a

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letters

Secret dealings

Regarding Peter F Johnson's assertion that Gary Webb's articles in the *San Jose Mercury News* were "later fully retracted" [**FT178:71**]. As far as I am aware, they weren't retracted by the author at all. I suggest Mr Johnson (and anyone else interested) reads Gary Webb's *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras and the Crack Cocaine Explosion* (1999 revised edition), where he'll read, *inter alia*, the inside story on why the newspaper "retracted" the story.

There are several other books that can usefully be read in conjunction with this book: *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press* (Verso 1999) by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair; *The Iran Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (Black Rose Books 1987) by Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott and Jane Hunter; *The Big White Lie: The Deep Cover Operation that exposed the CIA Sabotage of the Drug War* (Thunders Mouth 1994) by Michael Levine; and *Barry & 'the Boys': The CIA, the Mob and America's Secret History* (MadCow Press 2001) by Daniel Hopsicker.

Richard Alexander
By email

Raw correction

Your readers are a sharp-eyed lot so let me correct a dumb error in my 'Konspiracy Korner' [**FT178:17**] before one of them does. Nelda Rogers, if she exists, didn't go to Al Raw. She went to Al Martin who has a website called www.almartinraw. Hence the muddle in my crumbling brain.

Robin Ramsay
Hull

Place of the skull

I don't think Simon Woolley can have been the first person to notice that the rock he photographed in Rajasthan resembled a skull [**FT175:71**]. If he was, then it's quite a coincidence that the name of the nearest town, Gulguttar, so closely resembles Golgotha.

Tim Miles
London

Christian science

Theo Paijmans in "Doubly Damned" [**FT175:56-57**] describes Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), the founder of Christian Science, as an occultist, which is incorrect. She explained her system of prayer-based spiritual healing in *Science and Health*, which can be read on www.spirituality.com. She foresees that: "The march of mind and of honest investigation will bring the hour when the people will chain, with fetters of some sort, the growing occultism of this period." Eddy's students healed through a fuller understanding of God as ever-present Love. Clairvoyance, ritual, the supernatural, and magic play no part in Eddy's teaching or Christian Science practice.

Tony Lobl
Christian Science Committee on Publication, London

Synchronicity

Hearty congratulations to Lucia Ring-Watkins on her superb article "That Synching Feeling" [**FT171:42-47**] My own interest in synchronicity, and the theory that it works both ways, goes back to a childhood summer on New Brighton beach. The family car, like dozens of others, was parked on the sands. In a half-asleep state, I mused aloud "wouldn't it be funny if we got bogged in the sand". Two hours later, ours was the only car to become bogged and overtaken by the tide.

Since that day, I've kept an eye out for synchronicity. From personal experience, I can say that the more one can train one's conscious mind to simply accept that it's a part of the everyday world, the more one notices it, and the more often it happens. And following it certainly does lead to some interesting situations, which inevitably seem to leave the experiencer better off in one way or another.

John Batty
Nanango, Queensland

LAMA IN THE REICH

I greatly enjoyed **FT175**, especially the article on Himmler's Tibetan expedition. However, I think the author may have been a little too confident that no Tibetan Buddhist monks could have been found in Hitler's Germany. There is contrary evidence in Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda masterpiece, *Triumph of the Will*. Towards the beginning of the film, among the anxious crowds of peasants and fascists awaiting Hitler's arrival, there is a clear, if fleeting, shot of a shaven-headed black-robed Tibetan monk, standing in front of a sable Buddhist banner. The image is very brief, lasting only several frames, and not mentioned in any article I have been able to find on the Internet, but it is definitely that of a Tibetan monk. I found it when viewing a video of the movie at a university media lab I worked at some years ago, so I can't say the exact point at which it appears. This only raises the mystery, as the movie was made in the fall of 1934, some four years before the Himalayan quest sponsored by Himmler. But if Tibetans were present in Nazi Germany years before the war and even participating in rallies, maybe other rumours so vigorously debunked could be true as well. Perhaps no bodies of monks were found after the war because they all escaped to Antarctica in Nazi flying saucers?

Jay Nelson
By email

Inscrutable aliens

Regarding the view that UFOs are alien spacecraft, I have always wondered why they fly around our night skies lit up like Christmas trees. If these extraterrestrials have the technology to navigate across unimaginable tracts of space, then surely they must be able to reconnoitre in secrecy from outside Earth's atmosphere. If they do need to land to collect samples, they should be able to do so without needing to have the lights blazing.

JM Tracey
Liverpool

Simulacra Corner

This stone woman was photographed in Yosemite National Park by Juliet Lainson of Newport, Isle of Wight.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box address at the top of the page (with a SAE or international reply coupon) and we'll pay a tenner or 20 dollars for any we use.

number of other staff who are just as baffled as I am.

At first, I thought it could be caused by a fan close to the screen, but the arrow slowly continued moving when I turned the fan off. I recently asked the opinion of an IT specialist. He said it could possibly be dirt on the mouse, but admitted he really didn't have a clue and had seen the phenomenon himself on several occasions. Does anyone have an explanation?

Charlotte Smith
Reading, Berkshire

Virtual puzzle

On the night of Saturday, 28 June, I was talking on the phone to my sister in New Zealand. We are both collectors of Russ Bears (sad, I know), and were comparing websites and which of them had the best information on them. My sister told me about one called AGAPE, but for the life of me I couldn't locate it and she said she would email me with the full website address. Now, my sister was coming over to England later in the year and she asked if she could go through the Channel Tunnel. Not very enthusiastic about this, I just said that it could be arranged and thought I would speak to someone in my work who goes this way to France many times a year. We carried on talking about bears and our families and then said goodbye.

The next morning, around 7.30am, I decided to see if my sister had emailed me with the website address. I brought up the MSN home search page where my email icon for Yahoo is situated, entered and waited while it loaded. My husband was watching what I was doing because I had complained that it was taking ages to load. The page popped into view but it wasn't my Yahoo email but the booking form page for the Eurotunnel – not even the first page of their website, but the actual booking form page asking me for my credit card details.

Needless to say, I stared at it, confused, wondering how it got there and remembering my conversation with my sister no more than 10 hours earlier. I wasn't even into my email address and after asking my husband how this could have happened, and his not being able to answer, I cleared down and again went into the email with no problem and found the only new message on there from my sister with the info she was sending. If anyone can tell me what happened I would be very interested.

Sal Smythers
Godmanchester, Huntingdonshire

Aide memoire

A constant feature of *Fortean Times* (and many other publications) over the years has been the ads for various memory improvement tools: courses, drinks and herbs. There are always testimonials in the ads, but I've never read a serious critique. Do any of them actually work? If so, why are they not used in schools? Presumably the chemical solutions are placebos at best, but again, I've not read anything rigorous either way.

I remember reading something debunking the Scientology claims that senior members ("Clears" or whatever; them as wot's in touch with their inner space aliens) can remember anything they have ever perceived. This always struck me as a bit unlikely, as memory seems in my experience to be created by focus or concentration. The courses I've seen advertised all seem to offer learnable techniques that will allow you precisely to recall large amounts of data that you have focused on. But do these things actually perform as advertised? Can they plausibly function in academic environments, or do they have an unworkable fail rate? Do you suppose it might warrant an investigation at some stage?

Kay Orchison (Mr)
Sydney, Australia

Helmet dream

I read with great interest the letter from Kate Brett regarding an enquiry she made about a painting that she had never seen [**FT178:73**]. It reminded me of something that happened to me in 1983, when I was nine. My family were in the process of moving to a house on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall and I had been taken along to several viewings.

After one such viewing, I went home and dreamt about a British Army helmet on a pile of coal in the coal shed of the house we were about to move into. The week before we moved, the family revisited the house and I remember asking the current owners if they would be leaving the old army helmet.

"We haven't got an old army helmet." I was told with much laughing and ruffling of my hair. Rather cheekily I insisted that there was a helmet because I had dreamt about it. In a bid to shut me up the owners promised that if they found an old army helmet then they would leave it. Imagine my smugness when we moved in and I found an old army helmet placed in the living room for me to claim.

Ian Thompson
Colne, Lancashire

Mohawk from the future?

These screen grabs come from *Message to Love*, Murray Lerner's documentary on the 1970 Isle of Wight pop festival, screened by BBC2 on 26 August 1995. While there is footage of Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, the Who, Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez, Tiny Tim, ELP and the rest, the film "concentrates on the people: the spaced-out audience, outraged islanders and exasperated organisers" (*Radio Times*, 26 Aug 1995). As the crowd attacks the corrugated iron perimeter fences, a man in a brown jacket shouts "Get the f———g camera!" as a mohawked punk rocker (MPR) walks past.

The punk style wasn't created until about 1976, partly in London and partly in New York. Johnny Rotten has criticised the film *Sid and Nancy* for showing MPRs because the style is supposed to have arrived about 1979 – later than the Sid Vicious era. So was the MPR at the 1970 festival so hip as to be positively clairvoyant about the fashion of nine years later? Could it be that the man in the brown jacket didn't want the MPR to be filmed? Was the MPR a time-traveller from the future? Or could he have been added to the film later, for some obscure reason, using the computer technology that enabled Forrest Gump to meet JFK?

I'd be very interested to hear from anyone who was there at the time, in the unlikely event that anyone recalls – or indeed was – the MPR.

Nigel Ayers, *Lostwithiel, Cornwall*

Editor's note: as a long-haired student, I was among the estimated 600,000 people who attended the festival over five days in August 1970, both inside the enclosure and on the hillside (dubbed "Desolation Row") – but don't recall seeing any mohawk hairstyles.

PAUL SIEVEKING, 1969

letters

Hallucinogenic language

I have had many articles published in the medical literature but rarely get feedback, so I thank Mark Newbrook and Joseph Barnes [**FT173:74-75**] who challenged my views on hallucinations [**FT170:78**].

Mr Barnes says he takes a drug to help him sleep. Trazodone was not on my long list of drugs, especially those causing hypotension [low blood pressure], that trigger auditory hallucinations. A quick check of the literature showed its commonest side effects as drowsiness, dizziness and vomiting, and also nausea, tinnitus and hypotension. A drop in inner ear pressure can produce the middle four symptoms. I have not found any hallucinogens that do not also produce audiovestibular symptoms.

A case of transient psychosis during a drug trial in a 46-year-old woman who took Trazodone for depression (*AM J Psychiatry*, Oct 1983, pp.1,383-4) is quite consistent with the otogenic theory of hallucinations. She slept badly, hearing running water, was frightened by cars, and heard voices forbidding her to swallow the tablets. Her tinnitus and probable audiosensitivity are consistent with inner ear hyperactivity developing into imperative hallucinations and paranoid delusions.

Mr Barnes asks if a hallucination can make an informed reply. Schneider's first rank symptoms of schizophrenia include hallucinatory voices commenting on one's actions, or discussing and arguing about oneself. Many hallucinators are non-psychotic (such as Socrates and Joan of Arc), but it is likely that there is only one basic physiologic process for generating auditory hallucinations. I cannot see anything in Mr Barnes's sleep dictation inconsistent with an ototoxic effect of Trazodone.

Mr Newbrook concedes that the phonetics of speech, but not grammar or language, could have arisen from musical hallucinations. Presumably he believes that language is an offshoot of the evolutionary development of the brain and mind. Chomsky and others propose an innate language acquisition device. This sounds quite plausible, but falls apart when one tries to find which part of the brain contains this universal grammar. There are three possibilities:

1. It is in the left hemisphere. Children with proven perinatal damage to one hemisphere (hemiplegic cerebral palsy) have some deficit in IQ, but there is no excessive deficit of verbal IQ in those with left hemisphere lesions, nor any excess of speech and language disorders.

2. As in adults, language is mediated by a functional system of interlinked specialised brain areas. Infants with localised brain lesions do not have specific language delays, nor do those with such delay have localised lesions, or indeed any obvious brain damage.

3. Language is diffusely encoded in the whole brain. Children with global brain maldevelopment have reduced general IQ, with non-verbal IQ lower than verbal IQ. Speech and language are reduced in parallel, but specific language disorders are not seen. I can't find any disorder with proven brain damage and low verbal IQ with normal non-verbal IQ.

The surprising, but inescapable, conclusion is that evolution has not put a linguistic template in the brain. It follows that grammar, like vocabulary, must be stamped in from without, that language is socially constructed by the acoustic environment, from bottom-up not top-down. This is consistent with observations on those deaf from birth. Non-verbal IQ is quite normal, but verbal IQ is low along with linguistic skills. They can learn the grammar of sign language, but their spoken and written language is quite ungrammatical.

Anthony G Gordon
London

Clothing gender

In her letter 'Evil eye protection' [**FT176:74**], Maggie Blenkinsop repeats her previous argument [**FT160:37**] that "vulnerable little boys were dressed as girls" to protect them from the evil eye. She is no doubt right to dismiss the suggestion that babies were dressed in skirts merely to make changing nappies easier. A few hundred years ago, really young babies were tightly wrapped in swaddling clothes; it was toddlers and two- or three-year-olds who wore the frocks.

Her suggestion that "little boys were dressed *as* girls" is an interesting one, but is based upon the assumption that, in any one culture and at any particular period, there existed an alternative and equally acceptable manner of dressing babies and small boys that would have distinguished them as male. While this may have been the case when her father was growing up in skirts in Teeside after 1916, it has probably not been the case in most places and most times.

Surely all one can say is that in many periods and cultures babies and toddlers, male and female, have been dressed *alike*.

Throughout much of the history of Western Europe, this has meant that, once out of swaddling clothes, boys and girls alike wore frocks. As they grew older, small boys moved into breeches while their sisters kept their skirts. 'Breeching' was for boys an important stage in growing up. The age at which boys were breeched seems to have varied, possibly governed by fashion, wealth or social status. I believe there is a fine 17th century portrait of a young Stuart prince, one of the sons of James I, in a long silk dress – with a miniature but fully functional sword buckled to his side. The Stuarts saw nothing incongruous in this.

Today, babies seem usually to be dressed in trousered romper suits. Would one claim that parents are thereby deliberately dressing the girls as boys? In Western culture today, trousers are gender-free while skirts (except in Scotland) remain female; in mediæval Europe, skirts didn't in themselves denote gender – consider the long robes of merchants and dignitaries – while bifurcated lower garments were the preserve of the young and active male.

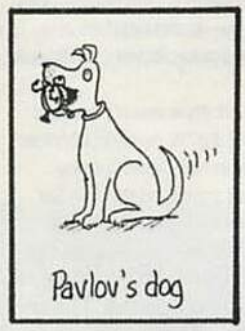
John Clark
London

Giant horse

Reading the letter about a giant rabbit seen by Bruce Redwine [**FT169:52**] brought back memories of when I was four or five and my grandma took me to Skegness for the day. On the coach trip down, I constantly looked out of the window, as I still do to this day whenever I go on coaches or trains.

I was looking at some sheep and horses in a field when I saw something that frightened the life out of me: a giant horse, at least three times larger than all the other horses in the field. I know I saw it, but whenever I tell anyone, it is put down to childhood imagination. Today the memory is as vivid as ever. Some of my friends suggest that it was that stone horse on a hill somewhere in England, but I assure them that no stone animal would be seen trotting through a field.

Mark Alan Swift
Loughborough, Leicestershire

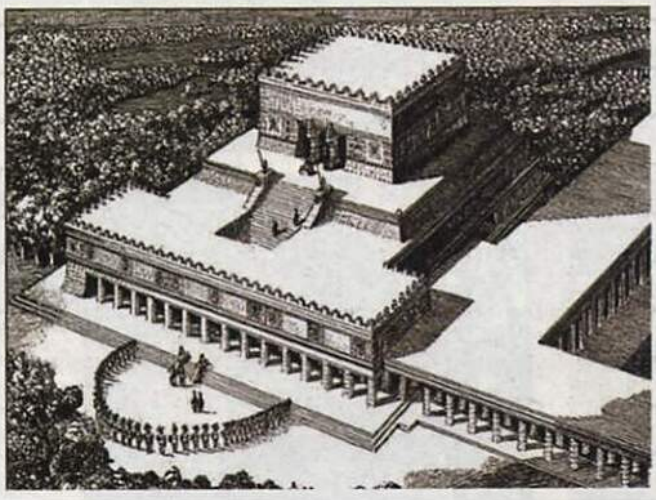


CAROL ISAACS

It happened to me...

First hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

Jungle cheering



In July 1994, my wife and I took a holiday in Cancun, Mexico. We decided to take a tour to the Mayan ruins at Chichén Itzá in northern Yucatan. Our bus journey took a good two hours through the jungle until we reached the large expanse of excavated ruins. Our guide told us to spend about half an hour looking through the orientation pavilion and then to congregate under the trees at the base of the large pyramid known locally as the Castillo. It was very hot and humid, so we were quite happy to gather under the shade of the trees in the large square.

As we stood there, I suddenly heard the sound of cheering from what sounded very much like a large arena. I was unable to discern the source of these thousands (?) of voices. The sound reminded me very much of being inside the confines of a football stadium. I tried to see if there were any loudspeakers responsible, but I knew that the sound was not coming from any one particular spot. It appeared that neither my wife nor anyone else was aware of what I could so clearly hear. The cheering lasted a good two minutes before stopping as abruptly as it had started.

Shortly afterwards, I discovered that close by was a ruin called "The Temple of Warriors" or "The Temple of a Thousand Columns". Could this have been the source of the cheering (from the distant past)?

Graham Conway
Delta, British Columbia

Hummmm

In June 2001, my then partner and I went for a walk around the headland on the spectacularly picturesque south western tip of the Lleyn Peninsula near Mynydd Mawr, north-west Wales. It was a beautiful day with blazing sunshine, few people about, choughs circling the cliffs and playing amongst the remains of the buildings which once housed pilgrims on their way to and from Bardsey – Ynys Enlli – which was clearly visible across the water. The sea was not exactly wild, but choppy enough to splash the rocks with some force, occasionally sending spray a metre or so into the air.

A short scramble down a creek and over some rocks to the sea brings you to St Mary's Well, a freshwater spring adjacent to the spot where the pilgrims boarded their boats to set off across Bardsey Sound. We had been here a couple of times before and the spot instils a sense of awe; with the waves crashing against the rocks you wonder how the sick and the lame managed to get aboard the little boats which must have taken them over to the island on their journey of faith.

As we sat on the rocks next to the well watching the sea, we suddenly became aware of a low humming noise. Dismissing it as a passing aircraft we ignored it, but then as it seemed to become a constant throb we became curious. We climbed out of the creek where the spring was and scanned the skies for a plane or helicopter, but there was none to be seen. The higher we climbed, the less audible the sound became, until out of the creek and away from the rocks it disappeared altogether. Deciding it was perhaps a boat near where we were sitting, we walked to the cliff top and searched for a craft below of any description which could have been generating such a noise. The only boat we could see was a small yacht to the east of Ynys Enlli in full sail. The distance and the type of boat ruled that out as an option. Climbing back down the rocks to the well, we remarked once again how the sound increased. Indeed, we could even sense that it was emanating from the rock itself! The strange thing was, when I placed my ear against the rock the sound became neither louder nor quieter, just remained at a constant volume.

After about 15 minutes of constant humming, the noise suddenly stopped. Was it some kind of gentle seismic activity? Vibration caused by the sea against the rocks? Maybe it was a small boat that we hadn't seen. Or the legendary "Hummadruzz"? Whatever it was kept both of us wondering for a long time. Has anybody else had a similar experience in this part of Wales?

Lee Stansfield
By email

Teleporting inhaler?

My son goes to university in a nearby town and lives with friends about 12 miles [19km] away from us. A few days ago I saw on the table, in full view, my son's inhaler. He hadn't visited for several days and it had certainly not been on the table a few minutes before, when I tidied up. This seemed very strange and we could make no sense of it. A few minutes later, I spoke to my son as I was meeting him for lunch and he rang to confirm arrangements. He also asked me to bring his spare inhaler as his had gone inexplicably missing. He had it with him and it had suddenly just disappeared. "I can't understand it, it was just here on the table...." I checked to see if the spare was in the drawer where it should have been – and there it was.

GC Marks
Yorkshire

FORTEAN TRAVELLER

29. Devil Museum, Kaunas, Lithuania

RACHEL BIGNELL detects the whiff of brimstone as she enters the realm of the Horned One in Eastern Europe.

Hidden away in the obscure Lithuanian town of Kaunas, the MK Ciurlionis Velniu Muziejus or Devil Museum is a well-kept secret. I visited mid-week, when the museum was virtually deserted, which only added to its inherent creepiness. There's something unnerving about being alone with 2000 devils...

Velniu Muziejus contains three floors, and a stunning array of devils in all shapes, sizes, colours and materials and hailing from all corners of the globe, is spread over them. The museum has a long-standing tradition: any visitors from foreign lands can bring their own native devil art to add to the collection, making for some interesting viewing.

I began my visit on the third floor, which showcases devil figurines from former Soviet territories. Virtually every state and subculture from Armenia to Yakutia is represented. Those originating in Slavic countries (such as Poland, Ukraine or Russia) appear to share a common theme, namely that of the devil's very closeness to us as he plays out a never-ending battle of one-upmanship with mankind. Some statues show the devil carrying off an unfortunate fellow on his back, others a group of villagers getting their revenge.

The devil has an important place in Slavic folklore: Russian peasants were permanently on guard against him. The most feared place in a traditional peasant village was the *banya*, or bath house, this being the only place where people removed their prayer belts, thus laying themselves open to attack. Stories abound of devils boiling and flaying unwary late night bathers.

The showcased devils are almost exclusively male, and appear in a variety of styles and aspects. Although most are purely works of art, others have been grafted onto everyday household objects: pipes, ashtrays, nutcrackers and plates all feature in the exhibition. The statues are made from stone, pottery and wood, but devils are also painted on silk or canvas. Some of the beasties have horns, others pointy tails, while still others are hairy. Imposing black and red colour schemes are the norm, though a few more dignified looking Jack-in-the-Green-type works add variation to the collection.

Contributions from countries as diverse as Mexico, Japan and Cuba are all on display alongside the Slavic artefacts, as is folk art from the indigenous peoples of Siberia. The stairways between each floor are decorated with macabre etchings, large-scale paintings or lively caricatures.

The second floor offers wooden carvings, mostly from Slavic countries. These are particularly striking, intricately carved in the finest detail so as to be almost lifelike. They offer a deeper insight into the devil's traditional role in rural society. Antanas Kazlauskas' work covers a range of scenes, including a devils' meeting in the woods, and their pursuit by a team of hunters, intent on retribution.

Kazys Dereskevicius goes one step further, using folk art to make a political point. His main piece, 'The Division of Lithuania', features Hitler and Stalin as two fork-tailed devils, dancing on a pile of human skulls. Unsurprisingly, this was only allowed on public view after 1989.

The first floor houses the work of local Kaunas artist Antanas Zmuidzinavicius, which forms the original nucleus of the collection. His specifically Lithuanian take on the devil archetype shows people battling with, and then riding on, goat-devils. Occasionally the scenes are gruesome and violent, the unfortunate suffering a pitchfork to the head, but in general they seem quietly and sardonically comical.

Sometimes the men drink with the devil; in other carvings they lasso him by the horns. One piece shows the devil giving a man a piggyback; here they look like happy schoolboys rather than sworn enemies. Zmuidzinavicius' devils seem to represent the sometimes tame but often unpredictable forces of nature, and the way setbacks can serve as a spur to man's own inventiveness.

The museum harbours an extra treat in the basement: a well stocked bar, which manages to pull off diabolical décor with taste and style. Although it was empty during my visit, I imagine it would make a perfect venue for drunken carousing in honour of the Lord of Misrule.

The guide, Arunas Stankunas, explained that when the museum opened in 1966, it housed 260 statues. Their previous owner, the aforementioned artist Antanas Zmuidzinavicius (1876-1966), was obsessed by the number 13, also known as the devil's dozen. (There may be some significance to the fact that 13 multiplied by 20 equals 260) He had obsessively collected them in contravention of Soviet law, which prohibited any religious artefacts. A collection of so much Lithuanian folk art also carried a covert nationalist, and hence anti-communist, message. Zmuidzinavicius faced exile to Siberia should his devils be discovered.

Following Khrushchev's thaw (after the death of Stalin in 1953), Zmuidzinavicius donated the entire collection to the state in 1966, and

ABOVE: Exterior view of the Devil Museum and an aeriel view of Kaunas.
LEFT: An impish figure grins at visitors.

ABOVE LEFT: Useful as well as handsome: nutcrackers. **TOP CENTRE:** A leering jester. **BOTTOM CENTRE:** Flyer for the Devil Museum. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Greedy devil: counting coins .

died later the same year. The original museum was then located in the painter's house. Thanks to generous international donations, the diabolical throng has now swollen to over 2,000, and a special new building has been built to house the numerous fiends.

Given that the Soviet Union forcibly discouraged religious activity, I was surprised to learn that the museum had been State-owned even in the period of more liberal communism. Yet it appears that the Lithuanians have always clung proudly to their Pagan heritage. Arunas claimed that Lithuania was the last Pagan state in Europe, with an unbroken tradition of Pagan practice in rural areas lasting until the early 19th century.

He went on to explain that Eastern Europeans have a different view of the devil from that commonly held in the West. "The devil is very close to man, he represents a part of ourselves," he told me.

In such a view, the devil is part of the natural world, and in some ways a personification of the forces of nature. The devil is also a joker, though one with a sick sense of humour, and is motivated by mischief rather than outright evil. In many ways he is similar to the Norse god Loki, another earthy figure deeply involved in the affairs of men, and a thorn in the side of the organised and predictable. He is associated with chaos, always on hand to stir up trouble if things look to be going too smoothly. In Pagan times the devil had equal status with the gods, accepted by the people as a normal part of life; it was only after the advent of Christianity that he was reviled and demonised.

Unlike the popular Western view of Satan as a potent source of terror, or of demons as the powerful representatives of evil, the East European devil is fallible, operating on the same level as man. If we are clever we can beat him.

The devil is a joker with a sick sense of humour

Arunas believes the collection to be humorous rather than sinister, and seemed surprised when I asked him if the museum ever received unwelcome attention from Satanists, or criticism from the religious establishment.

After a little prompting, he revealed the story of a group of Polish priests who came over the border for a visit. Although initially reluctant to enter, due to their fear of contamination by Pagan idols, they eventually plucked up the courage, resolved on getting to know their enemy. They were so thorough in their research that they were found downstairs in the bar several hours later, downing shots of vodka.

I was told that the majority of visitors come from neighbouring Latvia and Poland, though since the fall of communism people do arrive from further afield. This would suggest that the Slavic fascination with the devil legends is still current. After all, it has survived Soviet rationalist re-education, even cropping up in underground literature of that period, such as Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. Slavic Paganism is itself undergoing a renaissance: traditional folk celebrations are again popular, and overtly Pagan groups are springing up throughout the former Soviet Union.

The museum appeals to all ages, and now offers a multilingual guide to accommodate foreign visitors. Arunas suggested that the continuing appeal of devil myths demonstrates our link with a mostly forgotten Pagan past. This is borne out by the perennial place of the devil in all aspects of our culture, from the numerous re-workings of *Faust* and films like Kevin Smith's *Dogma*, to the careless phrases, such as "speak of the devil," that we still use every day.

I came away wondering if the artists believed that a carved devil is trapped in one form, and thus protects its maker, rather like a bound demon. Perhaps these artworks are really a continuation of man's battle with the Horned One in a new form? FT

Information: Velniu Muziejus is situated on 64 Putvinskio gatve, half a kilometre (three quarters of a mile) to the north of the city centre. The museum is open from 11am to 5pm Tuesday to Sunday, and closed on Mondays. Tel: +370 37 221 587 Fax: +370 37 222 606. Email: MKC@takas.lt

RACHEL BIGNELL is currently studying French and Russian at Durham University. She spends her spare time travelling Russia and Eastern Europe and dreams of moving to Japan to study aikido. Rachel believes we can learn a lot from observing Labradors.

Share your travellers' tales with *FT*! Send submissions, postcards and souvenirs to: The Editor, *Fortean Times*, IFG Ltd, 9 Dallington St, London EC1V 0BQ or to david.sutton@ifgmags.com

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Send to: Reviews Editor, **Fortean Times,** Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, UK.

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Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Ideally, send them flat in an A4 envelope. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 11 May 2004. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874-1932). Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data was ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown. From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox. **FT** toes no party line.

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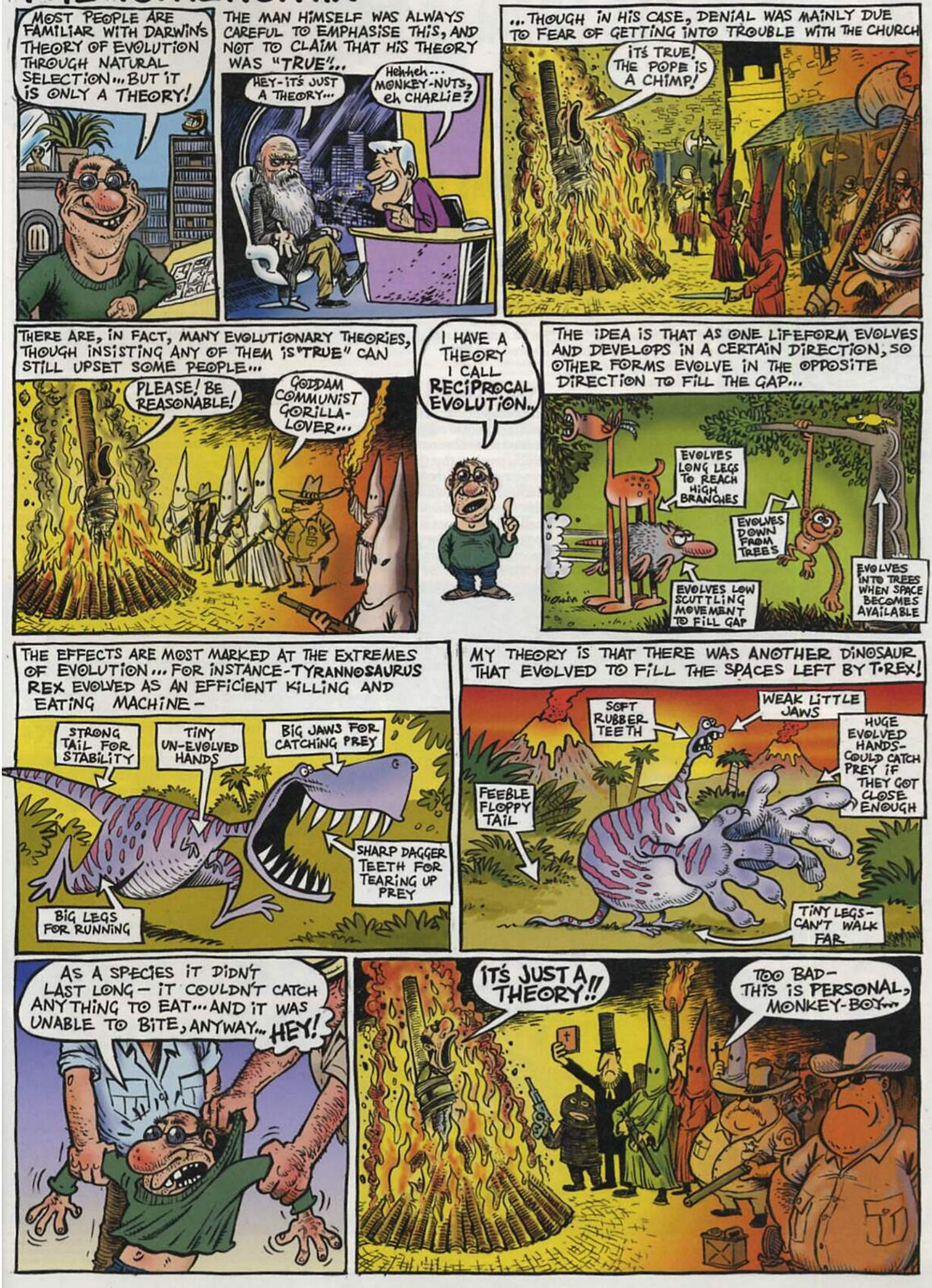
HUNT EMERSON


MOST PEOPLE ARE FAMILIAR WITH DARWIN'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION THROUGH NATURAL SELECTION... BUT IT IS ONLY A THEORY!
THE MAN HIMSELF WAS ALWAYS CAREFUL TO EMPHASISE THIS, AND NOT TO CLAIM THAT HIS THEORY WAS "TRUE"...
HEY- IT'S JUST A THEORY...
Hehheh... MONKEY-NUTS, eh CHARLIE?
...THOUGH IN HIS CASE, DENIAL WAS MAINLY DUE TO FEAR OF GETTING INTO TROUBLE WITH THE CHURCH
IT'S TRUE! THE POPE IS A CHIMP!
THERE ARE, IN FACT, MANY EVOLUTIONARY THEORIES, THOUGH INSISTING ANY OF THEM IS "TRUE" CAN STILL UPSET SOME PEOPLE...
PLEASE! BE REASONABLE!
GODDAM COMMUNIST GORILLA-LOVER...
I HAVE A THEORY I CALL RECIPROCAL EVOLUTION...
THE IDEA IS THAT AS ONE LIFEFORM EVOLVES AND DEVELOPS IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION, SO OTHER FORMS EVOLVE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION TO FILL THE GAP...
EVOLVES LONG LEGS TO REACH HIGH BRANCHES
EVOLVES DOWN FROM TREES
EVOLVES INTO TREES WHEN SPACE BECOMES AVAILABLE
EVOLVES LOW SCUTTLING MOVEMENT TO FILL GAP
THE EFFECTS ARE MOST MARKED AT THE EXTREMES OF EVOLUTION... FOR INSTANCE- TYRANNOSAURUS REX EVOLVED AS AN EFFICIENT KILLING AND EATING MACHINE-
STRONG TAIL FOR STABILITY
TINY UN-EVOLVED HANDS
BIG JAWS FOR CATCHING PREY
SHARP DAGGER TEETH FOR TEARING UP PREY
BIG LEGS FOR RUNNING
MY THEORY IS THAT THERE WAS ANOTHER DINOSAUR THAT EVOLVED TO FILL THE SPACES LEFT BY T-REX!
SOFT RUBBER TEETH
WEAK LITTLE JAWS
HUGE EVOLVED HANDS- COULD CATCH PREY IF THEY GOT CLOSE ENOUGH
FEEBLE FLOPPY TAIL
TINY LEGS- CAN'T WALK FAR
AS A SPECIES IT DIDN'T LAST LONG- IT COULDN'T CATCH ANYTHING TO EAT... AND IT WAS UNABLE TO BITE, ANYWAY... HEY!
IT'S JUST A THEORY!!
TOO BAD- THIS IS PERSONAL, MONKEY-BOY...

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8587	50 Cent	P.I.M.P
7933	Beyonce Knowles	Me Myself I
8189	Beyonce Knowles	Crazy In Love
8589	Beyonce Knowles	Baby Boy
7497	Black Eyed Peas	Shut Up
8563	Black Eyed Peas	Where Is The Love
7470	Blink 182	Feeling This
8234	Blu Cantrell	Breath
7962	Bof Selecta	Proper Krimbo
8090	Boogie Pimps	Somebody To Love
7963	Craig David	You Don't Miss Your Water
0754	Darude	Sandstorm
7243	DJ Bobo	Chihuahua
6481	Eminem	Lose Yourself
7822	Fatman Scoop	Be Faithful
7766	Justin Timberlake	Rock Your Body
6397	Kevin Lyttle	Turn Me On
8326	Madness	House Of Fun
0397	Michael Jackson	Billie Jean
7918	Missy Elliott	Pass That dutch
7946	R Kelly	Ignition Remix
5872	Scooter	The Logical Song
7794	Sean Paul	Get Busy
8063	Sean Paul	I'm Still In Love With You
7474	Studio B/Romeo	I See Girls
5794	The Darkness	Hands Off My Woman
8370	The Darkness	A Thing Called Love
8245	The Streets	Don't Mug Yourself
7920	Tomcraft	Brainwashed
7821	Tomcraft	Loneliness
8061	Travis	The Beautiful Occupation
8777	UD Project	Summer Jam
8400	Ultrabeat	Pretty Green Eyes
0710	Ultrabeat	Feelin' Fine
8098	XTM	Fly on the Wings of Love
7973	The Darkness	Christmas Time
6091	Nelly	Iz U
7822	Fatman Scoop	Be Faithful

Saturday Night Classics

8245	Don't Mug Yourself	The Streets
7901	Bad Boys for Life	P Diddy
8430	Playing with Knives	Bizarre Inc
8432	24 Hour Party People	Mondays
8434	Absolutely Flawless	the ones
6184	Starry Eyed Surprise	Oakenfold
5962	Hot in Herre	Nelly
4080	Addicted to Bass	Puretone
8436	Super Sharp Shooter	Ganja Kru
4027	Gotta Get Thru This	Beddingfield
8141	Motorhead	Ace Of Spades

Indie Classics

6010	By the Way	Chili Peppers
8439	Size of a Cow	Wonderstuff
0682	Whatever	Oasis
8440	Shot Shot	Gomez
8442	In the Fall	Inspiral Carpets
8443	Hrd to Explain	The Strokes
8445	Happy	Ned's Atomic Dustbin
8447	Hothin'	N.O.R.E
8449	Take me with You	Cosmos

80's Hits

8345	Lips Inc	Funky Town
8021	New Order	Blue Monday
4154	Soft Cell	Tainted Love
7910	Wham	Wake Me Up Before You ...
0619	DJ Quicksilver	Belissima
8189	Blondie	Heart Of Glass
1274	Gry Newman	Cars
0232	A HA	Take On Me
0850	Bee Gees	Tragedy

Dance Classics

0744	ATB	9 Till I Come
7787	Basement Jaxx	Lucky Starr
8214	Benny Bennassi	Satisfaction
7579	Chemical Brothers	Get Yourself High

Dance Classics contd...

0754	Drude	Sandstorm
0616	Delierium	Silence
1243	DJ Otzi	Hey Baby
0619	DJ Quicksilver	Belissima
0621	Faithless	Insomnia
0758	Faithless	God Is A DJ
0339	Fragma	Toca's Miracle
7565	Goldfrapp	Twist
1068	Ian Van Dahl	Castles In The Sky
8721	Ian Van Dahl	I Can't Let You Go
4028	PPK	Resurrection
0208	Robert Miles	Children
0218	Sash	Equador
5872	Scooter	The Logical Song
7163	Scooter	The Weekend
7860	Tomcraft	Brainwashed
7821	Tomcraft	Loniness

Metal Mayhem

7470	Blink 182	Feeling This
7523	Iron Maiden	Rainmaker
7790	Bon Jovi	Wanted Dead Or Alive
7830	No Doubt	It's My Life
7831	Red Hot Chilli Peppers	Fortune Faded
7853	The Coral	Bill McCai
8166	The Drkness	Growing On Me
8370	The Drkness	Thing Called Love
5794	The Drkness	Get Your Hands Off...
7533	Finch	Worms Of The Earth
8177	Metallica	St Anger
7181	Electric Six	Gaybar
8576	White Stripes	I Just Dont Know
7221	White Stripes	Seven Nation Army
5112	White Stripes	Hardest Button
0296	Bon Jovi	Livin On A Prayer
1272	Deep Purple	Smoke On The Water
0036	Europe	Final Countdown
1275	Guns N Roses	Sweet Child O Mine
0544	Guns N Roses	Paradise City

TV and Film Themes

8486	TV & Film	The Sweeney
8488	TV & Film	Starksy and Hutch
8490	TV & Film	Police Squad
6107	TV & Film	Kojak
8492	TV & Film	Miami Vice
8494	TV & Film	Z Cars
8503	TV & Film	The Professionals
8505	TV & Film	Minder
8507	TV & Film	Knightrider
8509	TV & Film	Hill Street Blues
8511	TV & Film	Top Cat
6106	TV & Film	Hong Kong Phooey
8513	TV & Film	Catch the Pigeon
0083	TV & Film	Roobarb and Custard
6104	TV & Film	Dangermouse
5999	TV & Film	Bod
6116	TV & Film	Spiderman
8518	TV & Film	Battle of the Planets
0087	TV & Film	Scooby Doo
0049	TV & Film	Flintstones
8520	TV & Film	Are you Being Served
0022	TV & Film	Benny Hill
8537	TV & Film	Dick Emery
6130	TV & Film	Generation Game
1463	TV & Film	Dallas
8539	TV & Film	Making Your Mind Up
6092	TV & Film	Blind Date
0872	TV & Film	I will survive
0344	TV & Film	It's Raining Men
5168	TV & Film	Lord Of The Rings
1261	TV & Film	The A Team
0819	TV & Film	The Matrix
0076	TV & Film	The Muppets
1486	TV & Film	Knight Rider
0237	TV & Film	Looney Tunes
5150	TV & Film	Pheonix Nights
0785	TV & Film	Buffy Vampire Slayer
0051	TV & Film	Good Bad Ugly
5763	TV & Film	Great Escape Theme

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example... send... receive...

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eg: FORT 1234 POLY to 89039 Cost £4.50

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7419

7328

8057

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7655

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7706

7475

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8314

7633

7575

7614

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7742

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6348

1636

2659

3779

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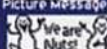
Picture Messages



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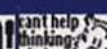

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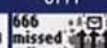

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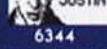

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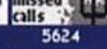

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TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND FORTEAN TIMES FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM FT'S PAST.

FEBRUARY 1974

Last month, I noted a 1994 expedition to Mt Al Judi in Turkey to examine a boat-shaped depression for signs that it was the remains of Noah's Ark. Well, 30 years ago this February there was a lot of media fuss over another alleged Ark on the NE slope of Mt Ararat. The most interesting aspect of this story is that it was photographed by NASA's Earth Resources Technology satellite and discussed in a session of the US Senate Space Committee. We noted a rush by six groups of Biblical fanatics and archæologists to apply for expedition permits. **FT6:5-6**

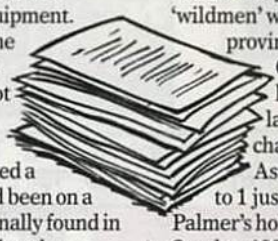
There were two notable vanishings this month. Tom Gatch, the intrepid American balloonist, was last seen on the 21st in the region of Tenerife heading east across the Atlantic. He set off from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on the 19th in a hi-tech gondola equipped with state-of-the-art survival and communication equipment. A few days earlier, on the 13th, the British trawler *Gaul* set out from Hull towards Norway. She was not heard from again and all 36 hands were feared dead. The disappearance of the *Gaul* sparked a long-running theory that she had been on a spying mission. The wreck was finally found in the Barents Sea in August 2002, but the mystery of why it sank remains. **FT4:7**

In Kenya, reports emerged of a terrifying 'new' beast, described as a "combination of lion, leopard and dog". It was slaughtering livestock on small farms all over the Mayanja district and word was sent to the Game Department in the capital for wardens to end the menace. The last lion was killed there in 1954 and leopards were said to be scarce. Locals variously blamed a plot by Ugandan Asians fleeing persecution by Idi Amin, and a magical beast conjured up by sorcerers. **FT4:3**

HE WAS STARING AT A TATTOOED MUMMIFIED HEAD

FEBRUARY 1984

In an extraordinary move, Chinese scientists said they were so convinced that a 'wildman' existed in the Shennongjia region of Hubei province that they recommended to the Science and Technology Institute at Guangxi that a portion of the Shennongjia national park be set aside as a protected reserve for the manimals. A 35-month study by a large team concluded that 'wildmen' were active in 13 of China's 29 provinces, **FT42:23**



Californian golfer Scott Palmer hit 18 perfect holes-in-one in the last nine months. What are the chances of that happening, eh? Astronomical! It's said to be 33,616 to 1 just to do it once, and four of Palmer's holes were on consecutive days in October 1983. **FT43:21**

Around the end of January, BBC2 screened a TV drama written by Ken Campbell. Called 'Unfair Exchanges', it starred Julie Walters as a woman plagued by strange telephone phenomena and was partly inspired by Ion Will's notion of using the phone system as a modern divinatory system (you dial at random and ask your question). It included many fortean jokes – like an interview with victims of a talking toilet – and Ken featured as 'Tim Ricketts' an editor of *Fortean Times*. He had a great line: after filling Miss Walters' head with telephonic nonsense she asked him if he believed *any* of it. "Of course not," said Ken, beaming like a Buddha, "I'm a fortean!" **FT43:26**

FEBRUARY 1994

What a strange month this was! Lorena Bobbitt was acquitted of depriving her husband of his manhood (**FT75:29**); a pigeon flew from the UK to China (**FT75:12**); an Italian statue of baby Jesus was stolen for the second time (**FT75:7**); and across Britain there were appearances of unusually-coloured frogs. We noted yellow, orange, pink and brick red among 30 reports; more peculiar was the explanation from the Cornish Wildlife trust: that they were all albino variations of the common frog *Rana temporaria*. **FT76:8.**

Thousands of small perch-like fish and crabs fell around a parking lot in Dunmarra after or during torrential rain in Australia's Northern Territory. Apparently, it was the third shower of fish at Dunmarra, nearly 400 miles (644km) south of Darwin, in six years. **FT75:49**

Finally, a Kenyan-born nun, Sister Anna Ali, announced that she had taken a photograph of Jesus when He visited her in her cell. Despite the constant flow of blood from his stigmata, there were no stains or puddles on the floor of her room. Sister Anna herself developed stigmata in the 1980s. When I phoned a Vatican PR office to verify these claims, they said, cautiously, that Anna was a housekeeper to Zambian Archbishop Milingo, who, you may remember, was for years under virtual house arrest in Rome, accused of being a "sorcerer" because his exorcisms were more witchcraft than high church. **FT75:15**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HUNT EMERSON

COMING NEXT MONTH

Manao Tupapao
Spirits of the South Pacific

Holy bull!
Animal cults of ancient Egypt

Little Green Men
Investigating the Aztec UFO crash

Fortean Times
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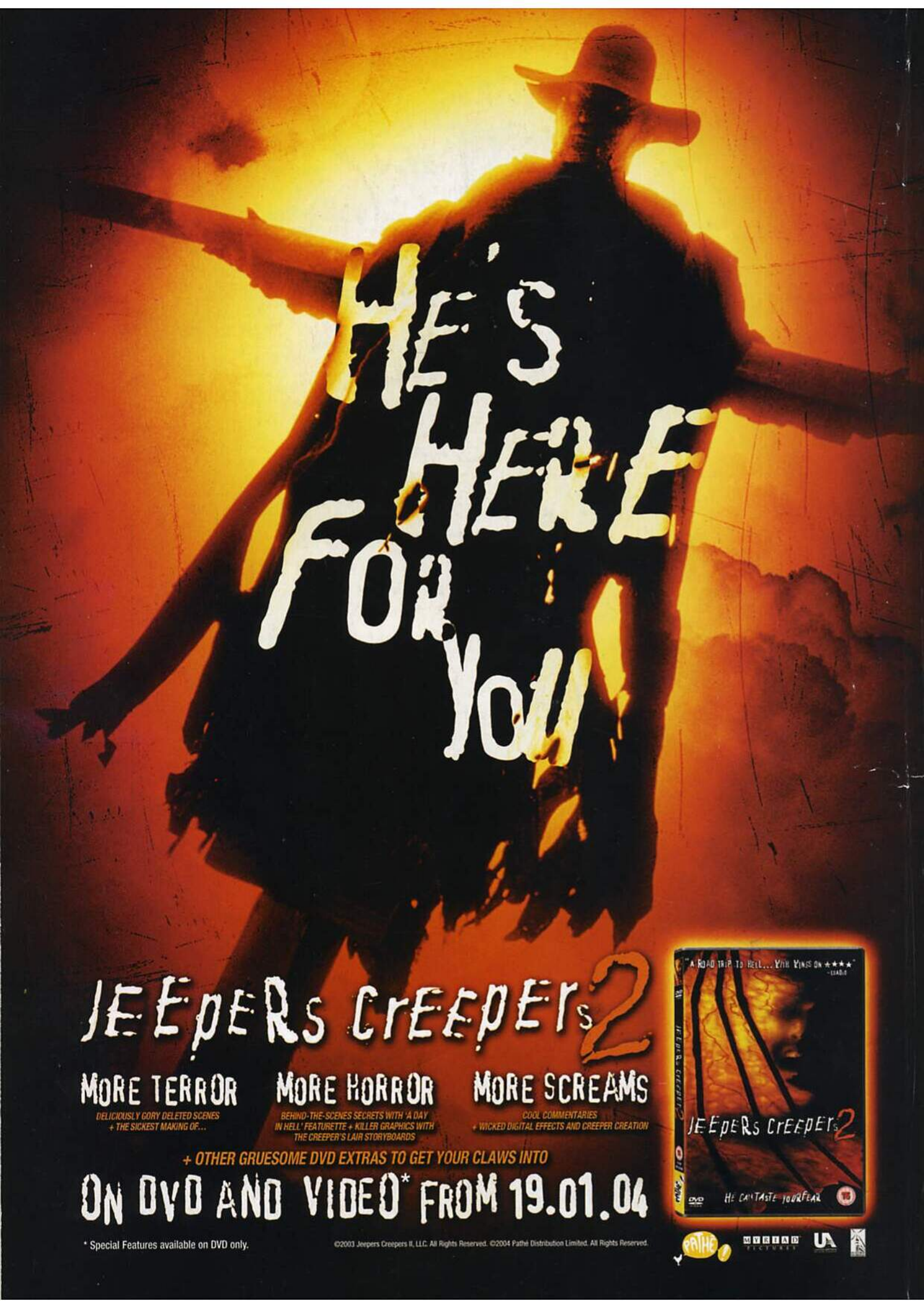

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